

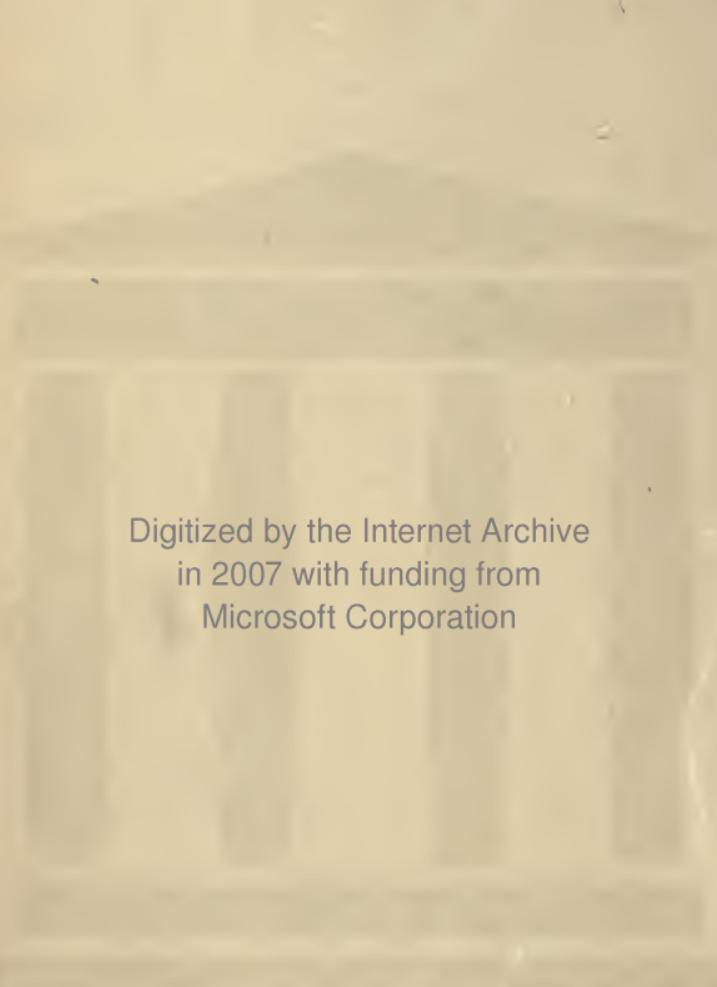
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARIES

A standard linear barcode is located on the left side of the label. It consists of vertical black lines of varying widths on a white background.

3 1761 00362897 1

974.5
Hope Steamer Price.
Nov. 1911.

B.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

GLEANINGS

FROM

“ON AND OFF THE STAGE”

GLEANINGS

FROM

"ON AND OFF THE STAGE"

BY

MRS. BANCROFT

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LIMITED

BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL

MANCHESTER AND NEW YORK

1892

PN
2598
B3 A35
1892

LONDON:
WOODFALL AND KINDER, PRINTERS,
70 TO 76, LONG ACRE, W.C.



I HAVE been asked to glean from the book my husband and I wrote, a few years since, about our lives both "On and Off the Stage," those parts of it more immediately concerning myself, and its lighter and more amusing pages, with such additions as might occur to me. This little volume is the result, and I beg to gratefully dedicate it to my best of friends—the Public.

M. E. B.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
CHILDHOOD AND GIRLHOOD	11
CHAPTER II.	
LONDON	35
CHAPTER III.	
AT THE STRAND THEATRE	54
CHAPTER IV.	
HOW AND WHY I BECAME A MANAGER	82

A COLLECTION OF STORIES, ANECDOTES, AND LETTERS.

The Prince of Wales's Theatre	99
Letters from Mr. Byron previous to our Dissolution of Partnership	108
Comedy of "Caste"	112
"How She Loves Him"	115
Letter from Tom Robertson after seeing the First Revival of "Ours"	116
A Law Suit with Miss Lydia Thompson	118
An Anecdote of Charles Kean ,	119

	PAGE
Paul Bedford	122
A Characteristic Letter from the Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, just as he was about to start for Geneva on the <i>Alabama</i> Mission	124
From Charles Dickens. One of the last Letters he ever wrote	125
A Riverside Story	126
The Maeaw in "Tame Cats"	130
The Iee in the Soup	132
Experiences of Cabmen	133
An Anecdote of Keeley	136
Death of Tom Robertson	140
A Letter from Mr. Ruskin after seeing "Ours"	144
Amusements at Home	145
"Mais où est Pierson?"	146
Some Verses written by Me on the Queen's Seclusion, a few years after the Death of the Prince Consort	147
Letters from Lord Lytton on his Comedy of "Money"	148
Mr. Hare and the Ostler at Liverpool	149
"What's there to Larf at in that?"	151
Mr. Webster's Last Appearance on the Stage	153
Letter from Lord Lytton	154
A Characteristic Letter from the delightful Comedian, Charles Mathews	155
The "Royal Box" at the Prince of Wales's Theatre	156
An Experience on Mount St. Bernard	159
A Black Dose	161
Letters from Wilkie Collins, W. Creswick, W. P. Frith, and J. M. Bellew, on production of "School for Scandal"	168
A Double of Ourselves as told by Mr. Bancroft	171
Tom Hood and "Piggy"	175
A Letter from Miss Ellen Terry on the subject of her En- gagement to appear as "Portia" in "The Merchant of "Venice"	176
A Letter from George Augustus Sala	176
A Strange Vision	177
A Startling Episode	178
A Letter from Mrs. Chas. Kean after seeing "Sweethearts" .	180
From the great Italian Actor, Salvini, after receiving a Small Gift from Me	181
Holiday Adventures	181
Practical Jokes by Mr. Bancroft at the Rigi Kaltbad	186

	PAGE
“Masks and Faces”	187
The Reason why I gave a New Reading to Margaret Woffington	188
Letter from Sir William Fergusson	193
One of Sothorn’s Practical Jokes	194
A Romance on a Mountain	195
Snowed Up	197
A Modern Mrs. Malaprop	200
A Little Waif	201
Street Swindles	204
“Muffins!”	205
Letter from James Anderson	206
A Visit to Homburg	207
A Matrimonial Contrast	207
Our Visit to the Salt Mines near Salzburg. A Comic Episode	211
Choice Letters	213
Mr. Jefferson	216
“Hullabaloo! that’s Right!”	218
Letters from Fanny Kemble, Pierre Berton, and Wilkie Collins	219
The Stammering Tenor	221
Jenny Lind in the Engadine	223
Lost on a Mountain	224
A Royal Breakfast	226
“Yours, Virginius; Yours”	227
John Clarke and Toole	228
Sitting to Count Gleichen	230
An Eccentric Servant	230
Before Mr. Sala’s Departure to Australia	231
Dr. Quain	231
“Cox and Box” in the Engadine	232
One of Our Sojourns on the Lake of Como	235
A Serious Blunder	236
“I could Do it Better Myself”	237
A Letter from J. S. Clarke	238
Our Last Night at the Prince of Wales’s Theatre	238
The Opening of the “Haymarket Theatre.” A dense Fog and “No Pit!”	240
A Letter from E. A. Sothorn	242
Theatrical Opinions by Sothorn and Coquelin	243
The Accomplished “Ape”	243
Anecdote of Macready	244
Anecdotes of F. C. Burnand	244

	PAGE
Concerning "A Lesson," by Burnand	245
Holiday Notes	246
Poetry and Sandwiches	246
An Awkward Position	247
An Anecdote of Charles Kean	248
A Carriage Accident	249
A Letter from Mr. Gladstone	252
Black Tuesday	253
Letters from Dion Boucicault, Henry Irving, Arthur Cecil Blunt, and William Winter	255
The Bishop of Gloucester	258
A Poetic Compliment	259
Mr. Labouchere	259
The Italian Bric-à-Brac Merchant on the Lake of Como	261
The Mysterious Black Cat	262
Letter from Lord Wolseley	263
Garrick's Advice to Jack Bannister	264
An Eccentric Old Lady	264
The Last Night of "Caste"	267
"Save the Wee Lassie!"	268
A Letter from an Old Actor	269
Behind the Scenes	269
Recollections of H. J. Byron	271
J. L. Toole	276
A Stock Speech	276
A Story of a Good Son	277
The Bright Sun Tells the Tale	279
A Juvenile Band	281
A Practical Joke by Mr. Bancroft	283
Letters on Our Retirement from Management	286
"Which of all My Parts did I Like Best?"	294
Our Retirement from Management on July 20th, 1885	299
A Tribute from Mr. Bancroft	304
"A Look at the Old 'ouse"	305
A Mad Admirer	306
The Pearl Necklace	311

GLEANINGS

FROM

“ON AND OFF THE STAGE.”

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND GIRLHOOD.

I MAKE no pretence to literary skill, and can only tell my story in a very simple way, in the belief that, as nearly all my life has been passed in the service of the public, I may speak to the reader as to a patient and sympathetic friend.

My father was Robert Pleydell Wilton. My mother's name before she married him was Georgiana Jane Faulkner. I am one of six surviving children born to them, all of whom were girls. How it came to pass that I had any ability as an actress, I could never understand ; neither my father nor my mother being born to the stage.

My father came of an old Gloucestershire family, and was originally intended for the Church ; but that idea was soon abandoned, for he was infatuated with an early love for the stage. He first tried the sea, however, then the law, and in a fit of martial ardour, having quarrelled

with his father, he enlisted as a soldier ; but, after serving his King and country for twenty-four hours, he regretted his hasty step, and implored to be bought out. His father declined, but his mother came to the rescue, as mothers always do, and so ended my father's brief military career. He then returned to his favourite books (Shakspeare's plays), and fancied himself, in turn, the hero of them all ; his love for the drama was a great anxiety to his parents and friends, but it grew upon him more and more, and eventually he left his home to become an actor, and so laid the foundation-stone of my stage-life.

At that time, far more than now, the profession of the stage was looked upon by many with great horror. To be an actor meant exile from home, family, friends, and general respectability. This was my father's lot ; none of his belongings ever knew him again, and when he died, he and his only surviving brother had not spoken to each other for more than forty years.

My father's mother was a Miss Wise, daughter of the Rev. William Wise, who was a Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, and afterwards for seventeen years Rector of St. James's, Liverpool, and sister to the Rev. William Wise, D.D., also a Fellow of St. John's, and for twenty-one years Rector of St. Lawrence, Reading. Several members of my father's family were clergymen, soldiers, and doctors, well known in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Three of them have been Mayors of Gloucester during this century. John Pleydell Wilton filled the office twice.

My maternal grandmother was a Miss Watts Browne, daughter of General Browne. She married Mr. Samuel Faulkner ; " Gentleman " Faulkner he was called, on account of his courtly manner and irreproachable character. He was a highly gifted man, a profound scholar,

and master of many languages. My father, who was much older than my mother, when but a travelling actor, met and ran away with her. His rashness cost them dear; their future lot for many years being little else than toil, anxiety, and care.

Often in later life have I sat with them by the fireside on a winter's night, when they have recalled to me stories of my childhood, and events in our early days together, which have carried me painfully back to the past, and brought many a tear to my eyes. My father would at such times dwell upon his love for his mother, who, had she lived, would, by her gentle influence, have brought him back, even if he had wandered for a time; but she was dead, and with her died the olive-branch which made peace between father and son. Dazzled by the surface-glitter of the stage, he went his way, building castles in the air, living in dreamland, and hoping for a position which never came to him. My poor father made his choice, and the moment he stepped on to the stage, in the estimation of his friends, struck the fatal keynote to his destruction. He had been defiled, and nothing could wash him clean again. He paid dearly for his folly all the rest of his life. Had he been wiser, he might have been somebody, and have held a position in society to which he was by birth entitled, my mother spared a life of anxiety and care, and I should never have been born. However, so it was, and so it is, and here I am!

Having shown, when very young, ability beyond my years, being taught when but four or five years old to recite poems and dramatic scenes, I was brought out as a child-actress, although hardly able to speak plainly. It was thought a great achievement then to stand alone on a big stage and recite. What a nuisance I must have been! Luckily the fashion does not exist nowadays.

Fortunate children ! fortunate public ! I wish I could recall a happy childhood ; but, alas ! I can remember only work and responsibility from a very tender age. No games, no romps, no toys—nothing which makes a child's life joyous. I can recollect a doll, but not the time to play with it, for we only met at night, when it shared my pillow ; and as I looked into its face, before I fell asleep after my work, I often wished that I could play with it sometimes.

When other children were cosily tucked up in bed, dreaming of their sunny lives, their limbs tired only by the romps and pleasures of the day, I was trudging by my father's side in all weathers to the theatre, where I had to play somebody else's child, or to recite one of the many character sketches which my father had written for me. In one of them, I remember, I used to be dressed as a little jockey ; in another, as a wee sailor, in little white trousers and blue jacket ; the miniature hornpipe I danced being always sure of earning loud applause, and it often had to be repeated. I was, of course, much petted by the public ; but oh, the work ! My poor little body was often sadly tired ; I was roused many a time from a sound sleep to go upon the stage, and sometimes, in my half-wakefulness, would begin the wrong recitation.

Up again betimes in the morning ; a hasty kiss to my doll, who grew to be regarded as a confirmed invalid, and never left her bed, except for a short time on Sundays ; part of the early day being spent in learning some fresh part, or in being taught lessons by my mother—to me a joyful labour, as I always had a great desire to learn, and even when quite a little child, so anxious was I to be able to read, I have frequently stopped people to explain and spell with me the names of streets, and

would cut out the big letters from play-bills and put them together to form words : perhaps early copies made of my father's and my mother's letters, although not able to read them, may account for my eccentric half-masculine, half-feminine handwriting. Once I rebelled while reciting as a little gipsy : I was discovered at a wood-fire, with a hanging-kettle over it, my father being at one side of the stage, and my mother on the other, ready to prompt me. My father gave me the words I recited, and my mother followed them with the expression of countenance I should assume at certain passages ; so I looked from one to the other for my cue. But on this particular night my small temper had been upset, and I somehow got mixed. When my father saw that I was nearly breaking down in the words, I assumed his angry expression of face, although I ought to have been smiling, and imitated the encouraging face of my mother when I should have been sad. To the great horror of my parents, when I went forward to tell the audience their fortunes, I saw our landlady in the front row of the pit, her face beaming with delight at my performance. I dropped my little basket of songs and cards, and stretched out my arms to her crying, "No, no ; me no stage—me go pit." The next time our landlady witnessed one of my performances it was from a more elevated position—the gallery.

At the age of five I recited Collins's *Ode to the Passions*, being accompanied by the special music. I wore a white lace frock and a lovely blue sash, of which I was very proud ; it was winter-time, and my mother has told me since that my poor little arms and legs were so red through the cold that I represented a tricolour, and ought to have recited the *Marseillaise* instead !

Among the selections I had to learn as a child were the "Trial scene from the *Merchant of Venice*," the

“Balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*,” the “Sleep-walking scene from *Macbeth*,” and “Satan’s Address to the Sun.” My dear mother toiled night and day to drill the words into my young head. Although, as I have said, she never held a position on the stage, her talent for teaching was very great; the art of elocution in her school-days being a branch of education, and lectures on the subject were delivered to the pupils by competent professors. She thus was able to give me what I never could have hoped to attain by other means, a knowledge of elocution and voice-production, to which I owe the power of making every word heard, even in a whisper, in any building, however large.

I have never forgotten a little lecture which my mother gave me in order to impress upon my young mind the necessity of making myself heard by the entire audience; she thought of a plan by which she could touch my feelings, as I suppose she found it difficult to make me quite understand, at that early age, the meaning of making the voice travel round the house. She said: “There is a poor man who is the last to get into the gallery, and consequently only has a corner in the back row of all, therefore he sees and hears with great difficulty; he has been working hard and has saved his sixpence to give himself a little treat. How dreadful then it would be to find that he cannot hear what the actors are talking about! how he must envy those more fortunate than himself, and how unhappy he must be! Think of him when you are acting; direct your voice to the poor man who is sitting at the very back of the gallery, and he will be grateful to you.”

My mother has often reminded me that, as a child, I was difficult to manage: impetuous, wilful, enthusiastic, ambitious; easy to lead, difficult to command; a long

speech in anger would fail to affect me, but a few gentle words would quickly conquer me. This appeal to my better nature, therefore, succeeded ; for ever afterwards I addressed myself to the " poor man " at the back of the gallery, as, of course, if he heard me, the rest of the audience must.

To show in what estimation country folk held the stage in my childhood days, I will tell what happened to me at an amateur entertainment which was given to aid a church-building fund. The programme was a varied one ; my contribution of one or two recitations caused a flutter of admiration, especially amongst the ladies present, many of whom were district visitors, and expressed their approval loudly, in such remarks as "Wonderful!" "Most interesting!" "Dear little thing!" "How clever!" When the entertainment was over, these ladies asked to be allowed to speak to me. I was taken to them, and passed from one to another, undergoing meanwhile a kind of inspection ; they kissed and petted me. "What a sweet child!" said one. "You must come some day to see mamma." "What lovely hair!" said another : the fuss they made about me was overpowering.

The gentleman who led me to them suggested to these ladies that they might subscribe a small sum to buy me a toy, as a souvenir of the occasion. They consented eagerly, and at once opened their clasped bags. While hunting for their purses, they asked with sweet smiles "whose dear child I was." When told that I was the daughter of an actor, the smiles vanished, and the expressions changed in a way to have turned even lemons sour. The bags were closed with a cold, relentless click, and the owners muttered between their teeth (for fear, doubtless, of breathing the same air as myself), "Oh,

gracious!" "Horrid!" "Oh dear!" "Unfortunate child!" and drew back from me as if plague-stricken. This scene dwelt upon my young mind, and I never forgot it. The poor ladies doubtless returned home scandalized and defiled; but the church did not suffer; the few bricks to which I subscribed have kept their places and have not quarrelled with the others on my account.

There seemed to me to be constant travelling in my childhood days; I cannot remember a settled home, and recall only a very restless life. Even at that early age I was aware of the responsibility of being at my post when required. Fines were often discussed in my presence with dread; and every day, as the hour drew near for rehearsals, I would run upstairs to put on my hat and pelisse, and call out to my father that we must make haste or we should be late. My anxiety to be "in time" was always very great. Once when the company was about to start for one of the towns in the Norwich circuit, to which we were attached, my mother, having been informed that I should not be wanted for a fortnight, decided upon leaving me for a part of it with the family in whose house we lodged, and who were fond of me. My parents had not been gone three days, when a letter arrived from them, saying that the *Green Bushes* was to be acted in a hurry the next night instead of something else. I, as the child-actress of the company, had often played Eveleen, so I was to be sent off at once. Preparations were immediately made for my departure, but as we arrived at the station we saw the last train moving away. My distress was terrible. I at once thought of the rehearsal the next morning; I was too young to argue that having played the part so frequently it would not much matter; I only knew that fines were

the punishment for absence from duty, and I must go somehow. The people with whom I was staying did all in their power to pacify me, but I persisted that I must go. It happened that a cart, or covered van, filled with sacks of meal or flour, was going that night to a village not far from my destination. The driver offered to take charge of me, and remarked, when he saw my anxiety, that he had "no idea play-acting people were so pertickler." The husband of our landlady decided to accompany me, and away we started. My bed was made at the bottom of the cart in some hay between the sacks, and really I was not uncomfortable. The driver's little dog made friends with me, and I slept with him in my arms. The cart shook a good bit, but so happy was I, knowing that every mile took me nearer to my duty, that I slept the sleep of a contented child. We stopped at a roadside inn to rest the horses, when I was lifted out of the cart and taken to sit by the fire. I can well remember some roughish-looking men sitting about. There was a large fire, with a curious-looking tin saucepan, shaped like a fool's cap turned upside down, and filled with hot ale, in which eggs were beaten up. The men, who were all smoking, soon got into conversation with my two guardians. They looked very hard at me, and asked all sorts of questions: who I was, how I came to be there with them, and one of them jokingly remarked, "You ain't been a kidnapping, 'ave you?" I felt indignant at this, knowing how good they had both been to me. An explanation of the case interested them, and when they were told who I was they shouted, "What! a play-actor?" and immediately requested the driver of the cart to ask me to "do a piece." "Will ye, child?" he said. I shook my head, and he continued, "I won't ask the little lass; she's tired." This touched me, and I at once jumped up

and recited something, I forget what, but I caused such enthusiasm that I thought they would all eat me. I had to do another "piece" for them, and by this time every one employed about the inn, hearing that something unusual was going on, had assembled. I shall never forget the scene, which Dickens could have wonderfully described. The villagers, smoking and drinking; my two guardians sitting together, and smiling as if they were responsible for the talent displayed; the landlord and his wife standing in the doorway, and several heads peering over theirs; the windows thrown open, and stable-boys and farm-labourers sitting on the window-sills with their mouths wide open. I thought they were all idiots, for they laughed like them. When I had finished, murmurs of "Eh, that's foin!" and "Wonderful, ain't it?" came from all of them. The moment arrived for starting. How thankful I was! They all came to the door to see me off, and the rough but kindly men treated me like a little queen. Although I was glad to get away from this strange society, I did not regret having given them a little amusement. But when they asked me for a kiss at parting, I didn't know what to do, for they all smelt of beer. I had "roughed it" a good deal, but there were limits! When I said I would not permit them to kiss me, one of them replied, "We ain't gentlefolk, surely; but you are a little angel, and we ain't used to the loiks of yer." I thought to myself, it will make them happy, and it won't take a minute; so I presented my cheek to them, at which they laughed, but kissed it. I was lifted into the cart as carefully as if it had been a grand carriage, and we drove off. I settled into my bed of hay and sacks, and after well wiping my cheek, where they had left their beer marks, I went to sleep again. When I arrived at the theatre early in the morning, escorted by

one of my guardians, who told the whole story, I received a scolding for my pains. I must have presented a strange appearance, for my clothes and hair were covered with meal from the sacks, and some one remarked that I looked as if my clothes had suffered a bad illness.

Soon after this we found ourselves at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, where I was the child actress of the company, and appeared in the pantomime of *Gulliver's Travels* as the little "Emperor of Lilliput"—a very tiny monarch. A gentleman who played one of the parts in this pantomime attracted my attention, and I can well remember the incident.

Children are all more or less prone to express their thoughts, and give their opinions at the most awkward moments. I was particularly celebrated in this way; my early training for the stage naturally sharpened my powers of observation, and any eccentricity of manner, or an unusual physical peculiarity, immediately attracted my notice; and, if I did not happen to express in words my interest and astonishment, I continued to look so long with a puzzled and inquiring face, that the poor creature, whoever it might be, became more and more uncomfortable. I, of course, was perfectly unconscious of the discomfiture I was creating, and would, with a wrinkled brow and wondering stare, fix my eyes upon the, to me, unaccountable freak of nature.

This particular gentleman happened to be severely pitted and disfigured by deep marks of that terrible disease, small-pox. I could not take my eyes from his face; wherever he went I followed, and stood gazing at him, until at last he said abruptly, "What on earth are you staring at, child?" I replied in thoughtless innocence, "I'm looking at your face; it's like a crumpet!" It will be readily understood that this inquiring and

observant nature was an anxiety to my mother, who tried very hard by threats, scoldings, and entreaties to break me of it; but in spite of promises of better behaviour, I could not resist the temptation whenever it occurred.

One day a friend of my father's, whom he had not seen for years, had been invited to a Sunday dinner; and, as a treat, my father requested that I should be allowed to sit at table. This gentleman was unfortunately afflicted with an enormous bluish nose, which was absolutely remarkable. My mother urged the danger of my being in the room, for she was certain that it would attract my attention at once, and she would suffer tortures. But my father said that if I was prepared for the peculiarity before seeing the gentleman, and warned that if I said anything I should be turned out of the room (a fearful indignity to me), he was sure it would be all right. I was duly cautioned by my mother, who told me that to take any marked notice of the gentleman would not only make her angry, but would wound his feelings besides, as he was sensitive on that subject. I promised faithfully that I would not utter a word. When seated at table the sight of this extraordinary feature almost took my breath away; it was the largest nose I had ever seen out of a pantomime, and take my eyes off it I could not. My mother, whenever she could by kicks and looks attract my attention (which was seldom, for it was fixed on the nose) looked daggers at me. She suffered agonies until dinner was over, and was much relieved when the moment came to kiss me and say good-night. She then whispered "Good child." With pride and delight I returned to my father's side, and asked him if I had been good; when he kissed me I shouted with glee, "I didn't say anything about the gentleman's blue nose, did I, father?" *Tableau!*

I can just remember Macready playing his farewell

engagement in the country, before retiring from the stage. In *Macbeth* I acted the part of the boy Fleance, and also appeared as the apparition of the crowned child who rises from the caldron when summoned by the witches to warn the guilty Thane. At the end of the play the great tragedian sent for me, and I was taken by my mother to his room. I was terribly nervous, for I had heard so many people say how proud and distant Macready always was, and I feared I was summoned to be scolded. My mother knocked at the door, and a deep tragic "Come in!" sent my little heart into my boots. We still waited at the door; his valet opened it, and there was the great actor, seated in a large easy-chair, his head resting upon his hand, and looking, as I thought, very tired and cross; the room was dimly lighted. We hesitated, not knowing quite what to do, when the voice from the chair said in measured tones, dwelling upon each syllable, "Who-is-it?" I felt awe-stricken, as though still in the presence of a king. The dresser said, "It's the little girl you sent for, sir." Macready answered, "Oh yes! turn up the gas," much in the same tone in which he had said, "Duncan comes here to-night." But he looked at me kindly, and said very gently, "Come here, child," holding out his hand. I went to him; he patted me on the head and kissed me; then, after looking at me for a moment, said, "Well, I suppose you hope to be a great actress some day?" I replied quickly, "Yes, sir." He smiled. "And what do you intend to play?" "Lady Macbeth, sir," upon which he laughed loudly and said, "Oh! is that all? Well, I like your ambition; you are a strange little thing, and have such curious eyes; but you must change them before you play Lady Macbeth, or you will make your audience laugh instead of cry." I did not quite like this; but he soon

won my heart by saying: "Will you have a sovereign to buy a doll with, or a glass of wine?" After a little hesitation, I answered, "I should like both, I think." He seemed to enjoy my frank reply, and said laughingly, "Good! I am sure you will make a fine actress; I can see genius through those little windows," placing his hands over my eyes. "But do not play *Lady Macbeth* too soon; begin slowly, or you may end quickly!" I drank my wine, took my sovereign, and went home rejoicing, feeling as proud as any little peacock. The great man had condescended to pat me on the head, and had absolutely kissed me. I did not want to wash my face again!

It was at Manchester that Miss Glyn came to the theatre as a "star," accompanied by Charles Kemble, whose pupil she was. Although he was now very old and deaf, I remember well the impression he made upon me at a rehearsal, when I crept into the wings and saw them go through the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth*. Not a word or gesture escaped me; I was much impressed, and I determined that I *must* some day play *Lady Macbeth*. That day has not yet arrived.

King John was also produced for Miss Glyn, and I played Prince Arthur: Charles Kemble was in a private box at night, watching the play. In the scene where the little prince is trying to escape from his prison, and falls from the battlements, I suddenly heard the sound of some one talking out loud, and then a laugh somewhere in the theatre. I became nervous, and thought something must have happened to my dress. I dared not move, for fear of causing more laughter, and there I lay in terrible suspense until I was carried off by Hubert. I was then told that Mr. Kemble had suddenly become very excited, had stood up in the stage-box, and shouted out something quite loudly; no one could tell me what

he had said, but an account of it appeared afterwards in some of the papers, one of which I have by me now, headed, *The Veteran and the Child*. "Charles Kemble sat anxiously watching the progress of the play of *King John*. He seldom applauded, and, for the most part, seemed saddened, perhaps by the memories of those halcyon days when his great brother was the King, and he the gallant Falconbridge; but the scene between Hubert and Prince Arthur awoke his approving smiles. More than once he clapped his hands, and when the little prince fell from the battlements, and the young actress exclaimed, with exquisite pathos—

"‘Ah me, my uncle’s spirit’s in these stones;
Heaven take my soul, and England keep my bones!’

the old actor was so carried away by his enthusiasm as to rise in the box where he was sitting, and exclaim: ‘That girl will be a great actress.’ ‘That girl’ was Marie Wilton.”

I was sent for by Charles Kemble, and complimented very warmly by him and by Miss Glyn. Oddly enough, the old gentleman repeated Macready’s advice to me: “Climb not the ladder too quickly, or you may come suddenly to the ground again.” He spoke very kindly, but every question he asked I was obliged to answer with a shout. When he said, “You spoke your lines beautifully,” I replied: “Oh! but you are deaf, sir; you could not hear me.” He laughed and answered: “I could see your words, child; your little face spoke them. But why wear a wig. The hair was too long.” I answered quickly, “I wear no wig, sir; it was my own hair,” upon which he seemed surprised, and said: “Bless the child, I thought it was a wig.” I was a little indignant at this remark, for my mother took great pride in my hair, carefully brushing it night and morning for so long that my father

remarked once, “That child will soon have no brains—you will brush them all out!”

While at Manchester I was a pupil of Mademoiselle Cushnie, the *première danseuse*, when, through some accident in practising, an injury was done to my foot, and I suffered acute pain. No one seemed to understand what was the matter. At length it was discovered that a tiny bone had been displaced, and I could not put my foot to the ground. I was a cripple on crutches for a considerable time, the only part I was able to play being poor Tiny Tim in Charles Dickens’s *Christmas Carol*; and I still retain a most agreeable recollection of the plum-pudding which we had to eat upon the stage. At length, after careful nursing, I happily recovered the use of my foot, though for a long while my health was delicate, and caused my mother much anxiety.

When, through my lameness, I was not acting, I was taken now and then as a treat to a travelling circus, well known as Pablo Fanque’s, which was then in the town; and this reminds me of our eccentric landlady, who rejoiced in the proud name of O’Brien. In appearance she was a tall, gaunt, lean woman, with high cheek-bones, pale blue eyes, a white and much freckled skin, and a mass of fiery red hair which she seldom brushed, and fastened at the top of her head with a single hair-pin. This poor lady had a mania that her husband, had he lived, would have been a rightful claimant to the throne of Ireland; but as there was not one, nor a likelihood of one, he thought he would not wait: Mrs. O’Brien’s presence was not sufficient temptation for him to “lag superfluously” on this earth, so he died, leaving her to bewail the fact of having to reside in an unpretentious house, situated in a still more unpretentious street, instead of enjoying the O’Brien rights and passing her life in a palace.

We never ascertained what particular palace she laid claim to, so concluded it to be somewhere in the clouds. Her only son, whom she always addressed as "Master O'Brien," answered to his mother's description in appearance as far as hair, eyes, and freckles went. He was a puny, scared-looking creature, and might remind one of Squeers' boys: his thin legs were too long for his trousers, and his thinner arms were ditto as regards his jacket, while his head looked as if every red hair had quarrelled with its neighbour; a sharp, cold-looking nose, of the chronic influenza type, getting pink towards the end, while his scraggy neck resembled that of a recently-plucked elderly chicken. This rare specimen of humanity, who was constantly forced into notice as "the heir to the throne of Ireland," was not permitted to enjoy life like other boys. Mrs. O'Brien strictly forbade him to mix with those who, of necessity, were beneath him, and the poor lad was made to sit on a very high stool during a great part of the day—as a kind of rehearsal, perhaps, of the regal position he might hold should his claims ever be recognized—gazing at the crownless head of Mrs. O'Brien, except when the aforesaid hair-pin would drop out: then he would descend, and, with a low bow, restore it to the hands of his deluded mother. One morning Master O'Brien, under the impression that his mother was out, actually summoned up courage to join in a game of leapfrog with some other boys in the street. Suddenly his pleasure was interrupted by the ghost-like appearance of his indignant parent on the doorstep. She glanced at her only son, and roared out, just as he was in the act of leaping over another boy's back, "Master O'Brien! Master O'Brien! it's handing your mamma to her carriage ye ought to be, and not Pablo Fanqueing it about the streets!"

Poor Mrs. O'Brien could boast of no better vehicle

than a wheelless barrow in the back-yard ; but she felt she ought to have her carriage, and that was enough. With all her eccentricity she was kind-natured, and her delusions hurt no one.

Brighter days seemed in store for us when my father, I believe, heard some news of a brother ; his delight was intense, for, though they had not met for years, he was confident that a reconciliation would take place, and that all anxiety about our precarious position would cease. Oh, the castles that my father built in the "airiest of situations !" assuring my mother that she and her children would now be placed in their proper positions, and that servants were at once to be engaged to wait upon us ; but his dreams of magnificence (which always led people to believe that we were better off than we really were) were soon dispelled. My mother, who never relied for one moment upon her husband's vague dreams, continued to train us up to wait upon ourselves.

My poor father's character was very like that of Micawber, with a strong dash of dear old Triplet, always hoping for "something to turn up," and always looking on the sunny side, however bad things seemed to be. Dear old dad—his bright nature helped us through many a trouble. Often and often, when our spirits were low, he would tell us anecdotes and stories of his early stage-days, one of which comes now to my mind, and always struck me as being very amusing. It was, and is still, I think, a custom in country theatres when a military play is acted, and men are required on the stage as soldiers, for the Colonel of the regiment then quartered in the town to lend a certain number of his men to the manager, who were glad, for good conduct, to add a little money to their pay. I forgot the name of the play, and the town in which it took place, but the regiment was an Irish one. At the end of an

act a decisive battle was fought between the two armies ; the soldiers were represented on the one side by men attached to the theatre, and on the other by regulars from the garrison.

On this particular occasion the performance was a "bespeak" night, and "under the patronage of the Colonel and officers of the regiment," all of whom, of course, were present. Everything went well up to the battle-scene, when the signal was given for the fight to cease, and for the regulars, who personated the beaten foe, to retreat ; but on this eventful evening they took no notice. The actor who appeared as one of the commanding officers kept shouting to them, "Retreat ! why don't you retreat ?" They still fought on in terrible earnest, and punished their opponents so unmercifully that at last they threw down their arms and used their fists instead. The result was a real all-round scrimmage. Actors concerned in the scene shouted to the men to retreat, as they had done quietly enough night after night ; the commanding officer calling at the top of his voice, "Retreat ! I tell you, retreat !" Eventually the curtain had to be dropped on the conflict, when the manager, who made an angry appearance on the stage, furiously asked the men, "What does all this mean ? why didn't you retreat ?" To which one of the soldiers, a sergeant, with his face much damaged, replied indignantly, "Is it retrace you'd have us, *with the Colonel in front ? Divil a bit !*"

After further wanderings—we seemed to be always "moving on"—we joined the company of the Bristol Theatre, of which Mr. James Henry Chute was manager. My first appearance there was in the opening of a pantomime as "No-Wun-No-Zoo, Spright of the Silver Star :" the sky opened, and I was discovered high up in the clouds, prettily dressed in pale blue silk and spangles,

my long hair hanging in large waves over my shoulders. As I was lowered by machinery, which every now and then gave an uncomfortable jerk, I was conscious of an anxious look upon my face, and feared the great tragedian's words, "Climb not the ladder too quickly, or you may tumble when you least expect it," were about to be realized. I was instructed to come down with a happy smile upon my face, but the expression must have resembled the fixed stare one sees on a photograph after the victim's long and tedious sitting. My voice was very thin, and not improved by my anxiety to get safely landed on the stage, so I fear I did not distinguish myself in these opening words of my song:

"Ah! No-Wun-No-Zoo will astonish a few,
For he fancies it's rather a thing that will do;
And folks with surprise will open their eyes,
When they turn to a page of this comical size."

The *British Mercury* thus kindly spoke of my *début* there: "The 'dark vaulted ether' suddenly discloses a brilliant star, from whose effulgence emerges No-Wun-No-Zoo, which character was played by a clever, and we must add exceedingly pretty girl, who made a first appearance —Miss M. Wilton."

I gradually became a great favourite, and was happy in Bristol, where there was a most excellent company, many of whom have since been well known. It was an admirably conducted theatre, and will always be remembered by me as my stepping-stone to London. Mr. Chute was an excellent manager; a severe disciplinarian, but a tender-hearted and just man. His wife, who was related to Macready, was a most kindly lady, and I remember her goodness to me with much gratitude. Fines were strictly inflicted in those days; but I have known Mr. Chute many a time return, privately, the forfeit-money to

those who he knew could ill afford to spare it, saying, "Do not say anything about it, and not to be late again"—a good, kind-hearted, severe old manager. The work was hard, but some of our best artists have left the old King Street Theatre to fill leading positions in London. Oh for a few such theatres now as that! We should not then have to bewail the fact that there are no longer schools for young actors and actresses to serve, as it were, a proper apprenticeship by playing every line of character in the theatrical pharmacopœia, from farcical comedy to high tragedy, under the direction of an able stage-manager, before settling on the branch of art in which to seek and work for future excellence; just as a general practitioner, after studying the anatomy of the entire human frame, becomes a specialist.

My mother wished me to be a comedy actress, and so to that end she and I worked very hard every day in a little quiet room at the back of the house we lodged in, and where she taught me how valuable and how necessary was the knowledge of elocution. Some of the counsel of those years gone by I repeated, almost word for word, in Mr. Burnand's little play, *A Lesson*. With her help and instruction ever before me, I toiled on with a determination to earn a high position. In country theatres young actors were frequently called upon, through illness or other causes, to play parts quite beyond their power and much beyond their years. I may say that during my provincial life, young as I was, I was made Jack-of-all-trades, acting anything and everything. Once at a minor country theatre, during the Bristol vacation, a "star" actor, well known in those days, came down for a short period, and commenced the engagement as Claude Melnotte in the *Lady of Lyons*. The actress who was to have played his widowed mother was taken ill, and there

being no one else in the theatre to do it, I was told to study the part in a few hours, and do the best I could with it. The prompter rehearsed the scenes with the company, and the Claude Melnotte, who was at least old enough to be my father, was not aware of his mother's age until he met her on the stage at night. I had on a grey wig which was too big for me, and would keep slipping on one side, crowned, as it was, by a tall mob-cap. The effect must have been comical, because the moment I was discovered the audience began to titter. Some one from the wings called out, "Put your cap straight; it is all on one side." In my effort to do so, I conclude I must have disturbed the grey wig, for the laughter of the audience told me that something was wrong. On came Claude. He began with the well-known line, "Give me joy, dear mother; I have won the prize!" His eyes met mine and he muttered, "Who's this?" My miserable attempt to look old, and my small voice calling him "my son," so upset him that he was almost speechless. After our first scene was over, he said angrily, "What does this mean? the whole piece is destroyed." I was frightened, but explained as well as I could; and seeing my distress, he said, "Well, my dear, it is not your fault; but surely they might have got some one to look more like my mother. I quite dread the next scene." However, when we came to it, I got through pretty well, until Pauline had to say, "Don't weep, mother;" which was greeted with "Ohs!" When Claude was about to rush out, and I exclaimed, "Claude, Claude, you will not desert your poor old mother! no divorce can separate a mother from her son!" the audience could restrain themselves no longer, and burst into a loud roar. No more dialogue was heard. Claude, in his embrace, gave me an angry push, which sent my grey wig and mob-

cap almost into the orchestra. The curtain fell amidst shouts of laughter, and calls for "Claude's mother"; to which, let me add, I did not respond.

It was during my stay at Bristol that Mr. Charles Dillon came to play Belphegor, and I was chosen to act the part of the boy Henri, his son. When I rehearsed it, I did so as my mother had taught me, in a natural manner; but Mr. Dillon disapproved, and said, "This won't do, my dear; you'll kill the piece, and destroy *me*! When I find that my wife, your mother, whom we both adore, has deserted us in our poverty to go away with some one who can give her wealth and luxury, I call upon you to curse her; then my conscience rebukes me, my love overpowers me, and I say to you, 'No, no, pray for her—pray for your mother, Henri; pray for her, my boy!' you are overwhelmed with grief, you fall on your knees, look up, and clasp your hands in prayer. Imagine you are saying, 'God bless my dear mother, and bring her back to me.'" I replied, "Yes, Mr. Dillon, that is what I was doing; only I can't *imagine* my tears and prayers—I must mean it and cry in earnest." He answered, "Yes; but you interrupt *me*. I have to look dazed, stagger to the door, look into the empty room, and faintly mutter, 'Madeline! my wife—my wife!' as the curtain falls. All this is very important, so you must be careful, and not say things audibly that take away the attention of the audience; you can mean your grief, but keep it to yourself." I said, "Well, but you are going to say things audibly, and beautifully you do it, for you make me cry; surely if my sobs and prayers are faintly heard through your speech it must help you, and it will be natural. I feel the scene so real that it *makes* me cry. Let me try it again to-morrow at rehearsal; we will ask Mr. Chute to be present, and if he says it is not effective,

I will act it as you wish." He looked wonderingly at me, and then, with a smile, said, "You are a strange little creature; but it shall be so; the manager shall decide." So we had our rehearsal, and the scene affected Mr. Chute to tears. He said that if acted in that way it would cause a sensation. When the night came the applause was tremendous, and the success assured.

Mr. Dillon's Belphegor was a truly fine performance, and he admitted that my rendering of Henri materially assisted his acting; but I nearly lost the part through his first want of confidence in me. After the performance Mr. Dillon said, "Good girl! If ever I have a London theatre, I shall give you an engagement." Very soon after this he kept his word, for he became manager of the Lyceum, and sent me an offer to play my old part. Mr. Chute strongly advised my mother to accept it, as he thought this a splendid opportunity for me, and that he should expect great things of me in the future. So frightened was I at the bare thought of appearing in London, that I told Mr. Chute if he would only give me *ever* so little more salary I would remain at Bristol. But he, knowing that it was important for me to make a successful *début* in London, and believing also that I should take a step up the ladder of fame as Belphegor's son, out of kindness refused. I thought it mean of him at the time, but I have thanked him since. He knew that a chance like this might never, or for a long time at least, befall me again.

When he bade me good-bye, he said, "Have courage. If you fail, and are not happy, come back to Bristol."

CHAPTER II.

LONDON.

How big London seemed to me! I felt as if the houses were going to fall on us; and in the vast city, with so much going on, there seemed to be no room for me. A restless, crowded, get-one-before-the-other city, I felt it an impertinence to try for a place in its rushing stream of humanity. So full, and yet to us so empty, for my mother and I were without a soul to advise or a friend to help us, having left my father at Bristol. My salary was to be three pounds a week. Of course things were cheaper then than they are now, or I don't know what we should have done. When I went to the first rehearsal everything around me looked so grand that I felt quite ashamed of my poor country clothes. Some of the people looked me up and down with a kind of sneer, wondering, I dare say, where I and my clothes had been picked up, and as if it were presumption for me to stand too near them, I had never seen so many people all at once upon a stage before; but I felt as solitary and chilled as a room in winter seems without a fire in it. My mother, in former years, had known two members of the company; but as we were down in the world they did not care to recognize us. They all seemed to know one another, and I envied them as I watched them chatting together. I felt nervous and shy, and kept close to my mother's side, who every now and then whispered some tender words to

give me courage. I will ask the reader to imagine for an instant our two lone figures standing apart from everybody, when a friendly smile would have put a little sun into our hearts. At last my name was suddenly called out, and I felt as if I had been shot! My mother said, "Go forward, dear, and show yourself." I did go forward, and made about as much sensation as a pin would in falling on a haystack. I was glad to get away, and on the road home I remarked, "They must all have larger salaries than mine, mother, they are dressed so well." She laughed, and said, "They are established favourites, you see. You will one day earn a large salary too; and remember, should you then ever see a stranger poorly dressed, waiting and wishing for a kind word, don't turn away, but hold out a helping hand if you can." I looked at her, saw the tears in her eyes, and understood her meaning.

I was at rehearsal every morning, and gradually became more accustomed to the large theatre and its surroundings. The stage-manager was one of those who had known my parents in the country some years before. When he was in needy circumstances they had often helped him, and my mother had nursed him through an illness. "Go to him," she said, "tell him whose daughter you are, and he will be kind to you, I'm sure." I did go to him, and I did tell him who I was. He laughed, and said, "Well, what of that?" I could not answer, as I knew no more, so I returned to my place, blushing and ashamed. He was always harsh to me, calling me to account for every small mistake in the roughest way. He knew that I was nobody, and, I suppose, presumed upon it.

Greatly to my relief, during the rehearsals of *Belphegor* my *un-amiable* stage-manager was taken ill, and for days was unable to attend them. Oh, joy, he was ill, and we

rehearsed without him ! All then went smoothly ; Mr. Dillon was so kind and encouraging that I went home rejoicing, hoping that the illness might last until the first night was over ; but my enemy came back in three days, and I am uncharitable enough to own that never was I so sorry to hear of a recovery. However, when he again raised his voice to object, Mr. Dillon came to the rescue, and saved me from further trouble on that head.

It was entirely through an accident—how often do they govern the chief event in life!—that I first acted in London in burlesque. One morning, during a rehearsal, news came that the young lady who was cast for Perdita, the little milkmaid in William Brough's extravaganza of *A Winter's Tale*, in which Toole played Autolycus, which was to be produced with *Belphegor*, had been taken ill, so Mrs. Dillon came hurriedly to me with the part, saying, “My dear child, we are in a fix ; I know the notice is short, but you must do it.”

I had to learn both words and music in a few days. Knowing something of music, I found but little difficulty so far ; but my voice was poor and thin, and remembering the largeness of the theatre, and how particular a London audience was, I was terribly nervous, and feared, if I failed, to destroy any favourable effect I might produce in *Belphegor*. My troubles were not lessened when I was told that I must provide my own dress. Where, oh, where was it to come from ? my poor three pounds a week not having begun yet. I went home with the dreadful news to my mother, who, after considering a while, said, in her comforting way, “I can manage something out of the material which I have by me ; study your part, think only of that, and I will make your dress myself.”

Oh, my mother ! when I look back upon those struggling

days, I feel that I can never be sufficiently grateful to you for all your forbearance, your fortitude, your patience. What could I have done, but for you? I was informed next day that my boots must be pale pink silk to match the stockings. I could see that very little would be left out of my first salary; but it was useless to fret, so I went off to a shop where they were in the habit of making stage-boots, and boldly ordered mine, but was politely informed that, as I was a stranger, I must pay for them in advance. My mother and I went out together on a voyage of discovery, but at every likely shop we entered we were told that the time was too short, and that they would cost—oh! well, ever so much more than we could afford.

We were in despair, and going home with heavy hearts, when, with a sigh, I looked into the window of a little insignificant shop in the Waterloo Road, with great heavy ugly boots big enough for me to live in and receive friends. My mother smiled at my stopping even to look at these thick, clod-hopping things, and said, "Come home, dear; we must search again to-morrow." I made up my mind suddenly to go into the shop—something seemed to urge me. I told my mother so. She remarked that it was indeed a forlorn hope; but having a strong dash of my father's bright nature in me, always hoping for the best, I said, "Who knows? In the most unlikely place, and at the most unexpected moment, I may be successful. I'll try, mother; wish me luck!" In I went, and asked the man if he had such a thing as a pair of pale pink silk boots. I had asked the same question so often, that I stumbled over the words. The man said in a loud, common voice, "No, no; we don't make your fancy fal-lals here. You must go to the West End for those dandified goods; we don't wear them in the Waterloo Road."

I was about to leave the shop, thinking how foolish I must look, when a woman's voice from the inner room called out, "I say, stop, miss!"—here she appeared—"did I 'ear yer say yer wanted a pair of pale silk boots? Well, I believe I 'ave the very thing." The husband said, "Why, what are you talking about?" She went on as though he had not spoken. "There was a little girl what was to 'ave acted a fairy at the Surrey more nor a year ago; 'er mother and 'er lodged 'ere. The poor little thing took ill, and 'er mother put 'er into a horspital, and left these lodgings; she asked me to buy the boots, and, in fact, all 'er things, as she couldn't now use them. So I bought them from 'er, and sold them agin to another party—all but the boots, for they said they was too small for any one they knew. 'Ere, Billy! bring them pink boots down from out of the back room: you'll find 'em wrapped up in soft paper on the top shelf in the cupboard. I'm afraid, though, they'll be too small for you, but you can see them."

How I prayed that those boots might fit! The clouds seemed to be lifting. Down came Billy with the boots: they were tried on—they fitted me as if they had been made for me. Billy was very dirty, but I could have kissed him. Stay! I had not yet asked the price. I tremblingly said, "How much?" The woman hesitated, reflected, scratched her head, and then rested her chin in her hand, gazing down at the boots, while I tremblingly waited for the verdict. "Well, they're no use to me, 'anging about 'ere; you may 'ave them for three-and-sixpence." I went to the door, called my mother, who was startled by my excited manner, and came hurriedly to me.

"Give me three-and-sixpence, mother." "What for?" "The boots! Pale pink silk! Just what I wanted! Fit

me beautifully ! Belonged to a little girl ! Three-and-sixpence ! ” I gasped all this out, for I was excited, and out of breath, and hardly knew what I was doing. I held my treasured parcel to my heart as I went gaily home, and dreamt of nothing that night but pink silk boots ! I felt so happy next morning, and trotted over Waterloo Bridge to rehearsal with a merry, light heart, feeling even strong enough to brave the stage-manager ! I sang the music correctly, but my small voice could scarcely be heard with a large band.

My stage-manager stopped me. “ Come, come ! this won’t do ! You don’t call that singing, do you ? Louder ! louder ! ” I tried it louder, and my voice cracked. He stopped me again, and said, “ My dear young lady, if you don’t sing better than this, you must be taken out of the part.” Upon which there was a flutter amongst the other young actresses who were standing about, each one hoping to be called upon to play it, when suddenly the musical director, who saw my troubled face, stopped the band, and said to my *bête noire* : “ Are you the musical director here, sir, as well as the stage-manager ? Allow me to know whether Miss Wilton is right or wrong. Her voice is not strong, but it is true to time and tune ; and I wish I could say the same for everyone concerned in the piece ” (a movement of approval from the orchestra). “ Now, Miss Wilton, you are too much distressed to sing again this morning, so we will miss your duets, and try them again to-morrow ; when your part of the music comes, the band shall be more piano, and then you will be heard beautifully. We’ll astonish them yet.” The tears rolled down my cheeks, and my heart was too full to speak. My kind friend ! how I looked for a smile from him whenever I came upon the stage ! When I had to sing, he took up his violin, following and supporting my voice,

and helping me on by hiding my shortcomings. His words of comfort and encouragement made me feel safe.

At last the opening night arrived; the house was crammed, and when Mr. Dillon as Belphegor, Mrs. Dillon as Madeline his wife, with a little girl in the cart, Toole at the back of it, beating a drum, and I seated like a boy on the horse, came on to the stage, there was a tremendous reception—such cheering, of course for Mr. Dillon; the rest of us being more or less unknown. I had little or nothing to say on my first appearance; but the supper scene which followed went off wonderfully well, Toole making the people scream with laughter, and becoming a great success before he had been many minutes on the stage. At the end of the act, where my best scene occurred with Mr. Dillon, the applause was tremendous, and there was a great call. I waited, hoping and expecting to be taken before the curtain by Mr. Dillon; but my friend the stage-manager turned round to me sharply, saying, "Now then, Miss Wilton, go to your room; you are not wanted." I walked slowly away towards the dressing-rooms; Mr. Dillon came off. I listened.

Another loud call; he went on again and again, each time alone. I reached my room, where my mother was anxiously waiting to know how I had succeeded, and determined not to let her see how distressed I was, I laughed and said, "All right, mother; it has gone beautifully." "Were you called before the curtain?" she asked. I was on the point of replying, when the call-boy came running along the corridor, shouting, "Miss Wilton! Miss Wilton—make haste! Mr. Dillon says you must go on before the curtain." Away I went, almost on wings, in case I should be too late, and heard the welcome sound from the public: "Miss Wilton! Miss Wilton!" I went

on *alone*—my little figure on that big stage, with no one by my side, and no one's hand to help me. The audience called me a second time, and as I was about to answer it, my dear stage-manager pulled me back, saying, “That will do ; we shall never get the piece over if this is allowed to go on.” I ran to my room, threw my arms round my mother's neck, and said, “A great success, mother ; kiss me !” When the play was over, Mr. and Mrs. Dillon patted me on the head approvingly, and said how pleased they were.

As Perdita I looked very nice, I think, with my hair hanging loosely over my shoulders, a pretty wreath of blush-roses, a charming little dress of white cashmere, which my mother made, a bunch of roses at my waist, pale pink silk stockings, *and* the boots ! I had a charming reception when I reappeared, and the audience was kind and encouraging. When I sang with that delightful actress, Mrs. Mellon, who played Florizel, the duet “Oh, my heart goes pit-a-pat,” it did indeed go pit-a-pat, for I was acting and singing with one of the greatest favourites on the London stage. The tune, which was charming, soon became very popular on the street-organs. When the piece came to an end I was called again before the curtain, and had flowers enough thrown to me to fill my little green and silver milk-pail : I felt that I had made a success, although some of the ladies told me not to feel too certain about it, as the critics often condemned what an audience had praised. We were all told to be at the theatre on the following morning for some alterations. I was terribly anxious to see the newspapers, but I was afraid, and so went to the theatre without knowing positively what impression I had made. The moment I arrived there the people flocked to congratulate me, seizing my hands, and overpowering me with praise. I

looked for the leader of the orchestra, my friend when I most needed one ; I wanted *his* congratulations. He came to me with an armful of newspapers, saying. "Here, my dear ; take these and be happy." As soon as I could, I ran home. How my dear mother and myself then read over and over again those criticisms ! I could hardly eat anything all day.

The following encouraging words from the *Morning Post*, it may be guessed, were highly valued by me : "Miss M. Wilton is a young (apparently *very* young) lady quite new to us, but her natural and pathetic acting as Henri, the son of Belphegor, showed her to possess powers of no ordinary character, which fully entitled her to the recalls she obtained at the end of the second act. She appeared also as Perdita, the Royal Milkmaid, and made still further inroads in the favour of the audience ; indeed, anything more dangerous to throw in the way of a juvenile prince it were difficult to imagine. She is a charming *débutante*, who hails from Bristol. She sings prettily, acts archly, dances gracefully, and is withal of a most bewitching presence."

Well, that was my first appearance in London. My dear friend Mr. Toole, who also then acted for the first time at the Lyceum, was exceedingly nervous ; but amidst all his anxiety about his own success, he never forgot to say a few cheery words to me. I must here tell a little story to show how he had already learnt the art of playing a joke. He asked me one evening if it were true that my birthday was very near, and when I told him the date he carefully wrote it down. Two or three nights later he said that he had lost the memorandum, but would I tell him again ? I did so. The next night he sent word by my dresser that he wished to speak to me. By-and-by he followed me to the door of my room, and

said, "Dear little Marie, you will consider me very stupid, but for the life of me I can't remember that date you gave me; I left the memorandum in my pocket last night, and now I can't find it. Would you mind telling me again?" I replied laughingly, "Why, it's to-morrow." "Good gracious!" he exclaimed, "how lucky it is that I asked you! good-night." I remarked to my mother, "I fancy Mr. Toole is going to give me something very nice for a birthday present; he seems so anxious to be correct about the day." The next night he knocked at my dressing-room door and asked for me. He said a few kind words, and handed me a parcel carefully sealed up. I at once began to open it; paper wraps, one after another were torn off, and still I did not get to the end of them. I felt sure that, in his love for a bit of fun, he had placed a small trinket in several folds of paper in order to work me up to the highest pitch of excitement, and then to astonish me with a pretty ornament of some sort. I was beginning to feel weary of unfolding wrap after wrap. At last the end seemed to be approaching. What could it be? The final package was carefully sealed. I paused to speculate on its contents; the parcel was round —perhaps a bracelet; but it yielded to pressure. "It's something alive!" I dropped it; it rolled. "I dare not open it; something will jump out." I stood on a chair, frightened out of my wits, and made my dresser undo the parcel. A dead silence; several more pieces of pink tissue-paper. Oh, the suspense! It is something wrapped up in wool; it must be a tiny bracelet. I'll please him by wearing it on the stage; only right, of course, that I should, after his kind remembrance of my birthday. What is it? A Tangerine orange! I wanted to laugh, but my tears wouldn't let me; when the terrible feeling of disappointment had passed, I fully enjoyed the joke.

Mr. Toole rarely omits, to this day, whenever I visit his theatre, to send me round a package of sweetmeats in remembrance of his first birthday present.

My next part at the Lyceum was "Serena, the little fairy at the bottom of the sea," in *Conrad and Medora*; then I had a small part called Lemon-drop in a capital farce written by Edmund Yates. He gave me kindly praise, and said it was a *sweet* performance, although a lemon-drop, and he was sure there was a bright career before me.

I should have been miserable in that theatre but for Mr. Toole and my musical friend, who never failed to help me in my songs and duets. I only made a moderate success in the new burlesque, for I had but little to do, and felt out of it somehow. Soon afterwards *Virginius* was produced, and when it had been played a few nights Mrs. Dillon, who played Virginia, was taken ill, and I was told that I must take the part. I sat up till a late hour working at it, and got through it tolerably well. Mr. Dillon was very pleased with me, and said, "You must study parts like this; you have a pretty natural style of acting, and I should like to see you one day play Juliet."

About this time one of the dramatic critics—my impression is that I owed the kindness to my old friend Mr. John Hollingshead, who then wrote in that capacity—remarked upon a trick I had of always using my right arm with a jerk, as if it were hung on hinges, and that I ignored the possession of a left arm at all. I was much teased also about this peculiarity by members of the company, who would give imitations of it, which, if correct, must have been very ungraceful; and I was at my wits' end to know what to do to break myself of it, for I had tried and failed over and over again. One day I took a four-wheeled cab, and just as the man was about to shut the door, in desperation I put my right arm in the

way, and so injured it that I was obliged to carry it in a sling for some days ; but I cured myself of my bad habit, for the left arm was brought into practice ; and by the time the injured limb was well, the ugly jerky action was an eccentricity of the past.

Mr. Webster, who was then lessee of the old Adelphi Theatre, offered me an engagement at a salary of five pounds a week, which I accepted ; but, as this was not to commence for three months, it allowed me to accept another offer for a little time, which Mr. Buckstone made me for the Haymarket.

I was not sorry to leave the Lyceum, as I saw little prospect of making progress there ; and my friends in the theatre were not numerous. Mr. and Mrs. Dillon were always kind, and I liked them both ; but managers cannot be responsible for malice. I was more fortunate at the Haymarket, and met with every consideration and encouragement from the company, one and all. Dear old Mr. Chippendale was the stage-manager, who encouraged and helped me whenever he could. What a change for me !

I made my appearance as Cupid in an extravaganza written by the accomplished and delightful Frank Talfourd, and described by him as "An Entirely New Classical Love Story, originally suggested by Ovid, under the name, or rather *apple*-ation, of Atalanta, or the three Golden Apples." I made a decided hit in my part, and was very happy ; my share in the music, too, was successful ; my voice, I fancy, grew stronger as my heart grew lighter.

Very soon after this, I met my recent foe, the Lyceum stage-manager, at a book-shop in the Strand ; he held out his hand to me, and, with a large smile (he was a big man), greeted me with, " Well, my dear child, you are getting

on rapidly, and I congratulate you." I could not take his hand, but glared at him, and could feel myself getting red with passion. The remembrance of the indignities which he had made me suffer mounted to my face, and I said, "Sir, you almost broke my heart at a time when I sorely needed help and support; now that I am successful, and beyond your reach, you can offer me your hand in friendship. I refuse to take it." I put all the dignity into this speech at my command (it was not much). But he only laughed, and answered, "Oh, my dear little God of Love, don't be severe." We never met again. I have long ago forgiven, but have not forgotten him.

After this I will leave a subject which is not interesting to the outside world; but were I to relate at length many cruel landmarks in my early career, I should probably be accused of exaggeration; so perhaps it is better to bury them in the past, though the remembrance of them makes me feel, at times, a little bitter, in spite of myself. Had it not been for a dogged determination to work on, and succeed in spite of them, I scarcely know where I should be now. But "*Perseverando*" is the Wilton motto, and although it was almost extinguished in my father's case, it rose from its ashes again in mine.

My engagement at the Haymarket was during some of the brightest days of the old company, and my short stay made me regret that I had not the advantage of acting in the comedies that were played there so perfectly.

Frank Talfourd was a man of very delicate constitution, and was constantly upbraided by his friends for not taking more care of himself. A friend remarked to him, "You never wear a great coat," and he replied, "No, I never was." One very bleak, cold day he was met in the Strand by his brother author, Robert Brough, who was

so distressed to see that Talfourd was not wrapped up, that he told him, in strong terms, how wrong it was to himself, and how unkind to his friends. Brough insisted that he must wear thick woollen undervests, and to make sure of his doing so, took him into a neighbouring shop, and asked for some to be shown to them. The man produced samples, some of which were of a light grey colour, others brown. Talfourd ordered some light ones, when the assistant shook his head. "I should prefer the brown, sir, if I were you." "Why?" asked Talfourd; "are they better made, or of finer material?" "No, sir," was the answer; "they are all equal in quality." "Then why do you so strongly recommend the brown ones?" "Well, sir," said the man, indicating the gray vests, "*those* will want washing *sometimes*;" then pointing earnestly to the brown vests, he exclaimed, "but *these*—!"

I regretfully left the Haymarket, where I had been so happy; and I regretted it all the more when I found that I had little or nothing to do at the Adelphi. Parts were given to me utterly unsuited to me, and those only of a few lines. There were, of course, many established favourites of the public in the company. Webster—a host in himself—Wright and Paul Bedford, Madame Celeste (whom I had not met since I had acted the child in the *Green Bushes* with her in a country theatre) and Mary Keeley, who inherited a share of her mother's genius, are the principal names I can recall. I had little else to do than stand at the wings and watch them, wishing that I were playing all the good parts!

Wright and Paul Bedford were always closely associated in pieces written especially to bring them together, in which Wright never missed an opportunity of introducing some fresh joke at Paul's expense, or at any one

else's. Poor Paul! He was a genial, good-tempered, kindly creature, and loved by every one. I can see his round, red merry face now, with his twinkling eyes, peering through the green-room doorway with his usual greeting, "Good morning, boys and girls! How-de-doo! how-de-do-o-o-o!" I was once one of a party who paid a visit to Wright at his model farm near Surbiton, which was the most complete and interesting thing of the kind I ever saw, and I remember how he imposed on my over-credulous nature by telling me, with a serious face, that all his guinea-pigs had, during the previous night, eaten off their own tails!

I was in despair of ever getting anything to do which would advance me in my profession, and implored Mr. Webster to release me from my engagement; but, although he was always kind, he insisted on keeping me to it, saying that my opportunity would come if I would only be patient.

I remember an extravaganza in which I played there, called *Cupid and Psyche*. I was again cast for Cupid, and during the run of the piece, I fell seriously ill from severe congestion of the lungs, caused by standing in draughts under the stage while waiting for my cue to rise through trap-doors. I felt that I had played Cupid so often as to wonder whether I was doomed to pass my professional life in appearing from unexpected and impossible places. My illness was serious, and I was obliged to resign my part for some time; no trivial matter for me, for in those days salaries ceased to be paid from the hour the manager was deprived of an actor's services.

X

Doubtless had my mind been less burdened by the terror of earning nothing, I should have recovered more quickly. One day, when I had been given up by our

doctor, and was lying in bed wondering what my poor mother would do without me, I opened my eyes and saw her weary face. She looked so lonely that a feeling came over me that I *must* get well. I fought against the doctor's verdict, and against the moanings of the servant —a kind of moaning which is peculiar to the race, combined with the most ghastly forebodings. The maid who helped to attend me was a good creature, but seemed to feed on the horrors of the situation. She whispered in my ear, when she thought that it would soon all be over, "May I cut off a lock of your 'air, miss, as a keepsake?" I was too weak to laugh or feel horrified; but it helped to give me more strength of will. At last, after a weary time, I grew strong enough to act again. I had been ordered first to the seaside to get back some health, but the chronic state of our finances would not permit the luxury.

Soon after my return to the Adelphi, an incident occurred which, I think, will be worth relating. During a rehearsal of one of my very small parts, a note was handed to me. Without looking at the superscription, I opened it and read the following: "Mary, before it is too late, repent of your rash conduct and return to your heart-broken father and mother." Naturally astonished at this strange request, only having left home an hour before, I handed the note to Mr. Webster, who knew my parents, and asked him to read it. He laughed and said, "There must be some mistake. Shall I go and see what it means?" I replied, "Do, Mr. Webster, please. I can't understand it; I must be mistaken for some one else."

I went on with my rehearsal, and, after being absent for some little time, Mr. Webster returned, and said laughingly, "Well, my dear, I've had a most extraordinary interview. It appears that there is some girl who

has left her home and parents in Wolverhampton, and has come up to London, where her friends are searching for her everywhere. Last night, an uncle of the girl's happened to be in the pit of this theatre, and when he saw you come on the stage he said, 'There she is! I've found her at last.' The man waited, it appears, until the performance was over, and then came round to the stage-door, but as you had finished early in the piece, you had gone home. He was told this by the hall-porter, upon which he asked where you lived, which, of course, he was not told. He seemed annoyed at this refusal, said he would call again in the morning, and here he is. You had better come down with me and satisfy the man of his blunder."

I went down, and there was a man whom I had never, to my knowledge, seen in my life. He came towards me and said abruptly, "I have got you at last. You will please make your arrangements to come home to Wolverhampton at once; I have been a long time looking for you, and, now I've got you, I don't intend to let you slip again. How you will ever be able to look your parents in the face again, I don't know." The mystery became thicker and thicker. The more I tried to convince the man of his error, the more determined he appeared to be to take me to my "distressed parents." All my efforts were useless, and the stranger was so earnest in his appeal to my proper sense of feeling to give my parents no more unhappiness, but to return to them, and try, by my future conduct, to sooth their old age and heal the wound which I had so cruelly made in their hearts, that the hall-porter, overcome by the touching words, at last cried out, "For goodness' sake, miss, go 'ome to your friends. What's all the applause you git every night compared with the 'appiness you will feel when you know you've done your

dooty? There's nothing so 'orrible as a undutiful and ungrateful choidl." I could hardly refrain from laughing, in spite of the unpleasant nature of the interview.

Mr. Webster then told the man who I was, and how long I had been in London; that I came from Bristol, and that he had known my family for years. The poor man looked mystified, and it was arranged that I should go through my work at the theatre that night, that he would telegraph to my "distressed parents" to come up themselves from Wolverhampton. I could only hope that something in the interim might transpire to help us. The stranger trusted to Mr. Webster's promise that he would do nothing until he called again on the following day; when, instead of appearing himself, came the joyful news that the man who so insisted on being "my uncle" had received a letter from the father of the girl, telling him she had returned home, and asking him to go down at once to Wolverhampton. The man was most humble in his apologies. He could never forgive himself, he said, for the annoyance he had caused, and begged the "good gentleman" (Mr. Webster) to excuse him to the young lady to whom he had been so rude, vowing that such a likeness he had never seen. The hall-porter laughed when he heard the sequel to this little drama, and said, "I knowed he was either mad or drunk; I never believed in him." How clever he was, that hall-porter! No more of my double was heard, and the incident which seemed only trifling, soon passed from my thoughts; but later in my life I have sometimes wondered if this evidently strange resemblance had any connection with an even stranger episode to be related further on in this book.

The season was drawing to a close, and, alas! I was only just where I began. I was ambitious to make a position in which I could command a good salary and be

somebody besides, for I was getting weary of being little more than nobody, when Fortune, who has ever been my good friend, came to my help. It was decided to pull the old Adelphi down, and build what was the foundation of the present handsome theatre in its place; this set me free, and I signed an engagement with Miss Swanborough to appear shortly under her management at the Strand Theatre. An offer also came from my dear old Bristol manager, to go there for a fortnight to play Cupid. Cupid again! My friends had begun to tease me about playing so many Cupids, declaring that I must have been born with wings, and could do nothing else.

CHAPTER III.

AT THE STRAND THEATRE.

My acceptance of Miss Swanborough's offer was an important step in my early London career, as from its commencement until I became a manager I was chiefly associated with the Strand Theatre, and, for a long time, with a line of characters—"burlesque boys"—which, in the words of the immortal Mr. Eccles, "was none o' my choosing." My circumstances, however, would not permit me to pick and choose, and I was thankful for occupation which gave me the means towards supporting our home. Miss Swanborough, who had held a leading comedy position at the Haymarket, was a charming woman, and never failed in her endeavours to make the members of her company happy: to her reign of management I always look back with bright recollections. When I received the part of Pippo in the *Maid and the Magpie*, I was disappointed at its being another boy, and wrote to ask if any change could be made in the cast. Miss Swanborough kindly arranged for me to meet her as well as Mr. Byron, whose acquaintance I thus made for the first time. He said he had written the part of Pippo expressly for me, and that he was distressed I did not like it. I explained that I did not wish to play burlesque boys, and that I objected to the part on that account. Mr. Byron remarked that he was a young author, and my not acting

Pippo would mean a serious loss to him, that there was no one else in the theatre to whom he could entrust it, and that he could "see me in every line of it." He added, "I am only a beginner, you know, and this burlesque may make or mar me." This appeal decided me; I could hold out no longer, so promised to play Pippo.

The original cast of this burlesque included Miss Maria Ternan (a very refined actress, who, a few years later, married and left the stage); Miss Oliver, already one of London's favourites, having won her laurels under Madame Vestris at the Lyceum; that splendid actress of "old women," Mrs. Selby, as those will say whose memories will allow them to recall the *Last of the Pigtails*; Mr. James Bland, or "Papa Bland," as he was called in the theatre, who had been so long associated with Planché's extravaganzas at the Lyceum, and had played burlesque monarchs in so many of them, that he was named "The king of burlesque;" and Mr. John Clarke, or, more familiarly, "Little" Clarke.

The piece proved an immense success, and as Pippo I established myself as a leading favourite in the theatre. Although not a classical boy, as Cupid was, he was still saucy and amusing, and the people loved to come to see him night after night.

Mr. Byron wrote a duet for Mr. Clarke and myself, at the end of which came a dance. It was quaint and strange, nothing very extraordinary; but it was a novel thing at that time to introduce a dance after a song or duet, and this one became the rage, as well as the *pièce de résistance* of all the hurdy-gurdies and barrel-organs of the day. Encore followed encore every night, and from that time till now no singing has been complete in a burlesque without a dance to follow.

It was not until some time later—indeed, when Forster's

life of the great writer came out—that I knew the opinion Charles Dickens, years before, had written of this performance in a letter to John Forster, in these words : “ I escaped at half-past seven, and went to the Strand Theatre, having taken a stall beforehand, for it is always crammed. I really wish you would go, between this and next Thursday, to see the *Maid and the Magpie* burlesque there. There is the strangest thing in it that ever I have seen on the stage—the boy Pippo, by Miss Wilton. While it is astonishingly impudent (must be, or it couldn’t be done at all), it is so stupendously like a boy, and unlike a woman, that it is perfectly free from offence. I never have seen such a thing. She does an imitation of the dancing of the Christy Minstrels—wonderfully clever—which, in the audacity of its thorough-going, is surprising. A thing that you *cannot* imagine a woman’s doing at all ; and yet the manner, the appearance, the levity, impulse, and spirits of it, are so exactly like a boy, that you cannot think of anything like her sex in association with it. It begins at eight, and is over by a quarter past nine. I never have seen such a curious thing, and the girl’s talent is unchallengeable. I call her the cleverest girl I have ever seen on the stage in my time, and the most singularly original.”

A circumstance comes to my mind concerning the *Maid and the Magpie*—tragic at the beginning and comic at the end—which, although it happened during its revival later on, had perhaps be better told here.

“ Papa ” Bland had long been known as an able actor, but when he played Fernando Villabella he was old and ailing ; his memory also grew treacherous, and he became uncertain in the words he had to speak. One night, on arriving at the theatre at his usual time, he was observed to be very ill, and to stagger after getting out of his cab.

He was led into the porter's hall, and within half an hour he was dead. His sad end cast a gloom over us all, for we were fond of the kindly old gentleman. There was no one prepared to take the part of Fernando, and what was done that evening I can't remember; but Mr. Byron generously came to the rescue and played the part himself the next night, when he introduced a couplet in the scene with his daughter, played by Miss Oliver, whose name, it must be remembered, was *Martha*, although by her intimate friends she was always called *Patty*.

The burlesque had been such a success, and was so popular, that it seemed to us as if the audience, night after night, had never moved from their seats, so many faces were familiar. It will be understood by this that many frequenters of the old Strand were acquainted with every word of the piece, and whenever a sentence was introduced or forgotten, detected it immediately. On this particular night, when Mr. Byron appeared as Fernando, he added the following lines in the scene with Miss Oliver, where, as her long-lost father, he is trying to bring himself back to her recollection :

“Jujubes, oranges, and cakes, I too did give her,
Pâté de foie gras, which means *Patty O'liver!*”

I shall never forget the laughter and chorus of “Oh's!” that followed these lines. Neither Mr. Byron nor Miss Oliver could proceed for some time; the latter was so taken by surprise that she could hardly finish the scene.

Before I tell what else I have to say about the old Strand days, let me recall some names of prominent actresses in comedy and drama, all of whom have, at some time in their career, acted with success in burlesque, and it may be that this sometimes abused side of stage-

life has its power and value in the shape of training. Since those days, however, although burlesque may not have fallen off, certainly some of the dresses have ; many of which might be described as beginning too late and ending too soon. Without searching deeply, I remember at once the names of Miss Herbert, Kate and Ellen Terry, Madge Robertson (Mrs. Kendal), Miss Cavendish, Miss Fanny Josephs, Miss Hodson, Mrs. John Wood, Mrs. Mellon, Mrs. Charles Mathews, adding, if I may, my own. While among our foreign friends I can at least mention Modjeska and Jane Hading.

I shall not weary the reader with a long account of all the boy-parts I played ; but, as I run through the list of them, I will rather pause, when I can, to say something of somebody else.

Season after season I found myself still a boy. When I was talking with my mother one day on the subject, and wishing that I might appear as myself now and then, I exclaimed, "Oh, dear me ! why can't I be allowed to be a girl ? It's all very well to be a great favourite with the public, and to be told I am so natural and real in a boy's dress. Well, if so, why was I not born a boy ? "

Now and then I had a part in a comedietta given to me, and I was so successful in it that I pined more and more for that class of character. I frequently urged Mr. Byron to write a comedy and give me a part in it ; he promised that if I would wait awhile he would do so. I did not object to burlesque itself, especially when he wrote it—so witty, clever, and bright ; but my training and ambition had pointed to a different class of acting, and I was frightened that if I did not continue to struggle for it I should never get my chance. If I could have been sometimes cast for girls I should have grown more patient ; but those Cupids had made authors think,

and, perhaps, the public believe, I could not play anything but boys. I must not, however, weary my reader, as I fear I often did my manager, with my grumblings.

The next "boy" was Sir Walter Raleigh in *Kenilworth*, in which, I remember, Miss Swanborough played Leicester for a time, and that wonderfully clever actress, Charlotte Saunders, was cast for Tresillian. She was, indeed, brimful of talent. Had she been tall, and gifted with a stronger voice, she might have been a leading actress in comedy and drama; but her figure was very short and stout, and the voice thin. There was in her acting a rich, sly humour, and a deep appreciation of the good things she had to say, which was very infectious. I had a great admiration for her as an actress, and a sincere regard for her as a woman.

Mrs. Selby was our "Good Queen Bess," who made her first entrance on board a "penny steamer." Being a very tall, stout woman, as she stood on the paddle-box, looking bigger than the steamer, she caused great laughter; when she prepared to land, after the words "Ease her," "Back her," "Stop her," I, as Sir Walter Raleigh, took off my cloak and (repeating history) placed it on the ground for the Queen to stand upon. My part was by no means a long one, but I had some good things to say like the following:—

"Because, your Majesty, should I e'er wish to pawn it,
I'll tell my uncle I've had a sovereign on [awn] it!"

One night, during the run of *Kenilworth*, an unfortunate *contretemps* occurred. When Mrs. Selby appeared, a large wreath of immortelles was thrown to her by giddy fellows from a private box. The poor lady was so upset and affected that she fainted, and it was with difficulty she managed to get through the performance

The circumstance caused a disturbance, and the offenders, who in a tipsy frolic had so forgotten themselves, were obliged to leave the theatre. The next day they had an interview with Mr. Charles Selby, when they made a humble apology, which, I believe, was published. Mrs. Selby never quite recovered from what was, at the time, a severe shock to her system. She had passed a great part of her life in France, and having become imbued with superstition, could never be persuaded that the immortelles did not come as a warning of her approaching death ; her fears, however, were groundless, for she lived some years after the occurrence.

John Clarke's name comes at once to my memory, not only as an old friend, but as an admirable actor, who, like myself, pined for other than burlesque parts, and lived to prove the justice of his aspirations.

Next came Albert in *William Tell*, for which, I think, that inimitable comedian James Rogers (it seems so strange to call him so, for he was never known by his playmates but as "Jimmy," and I must beg the reader to forgive my using that familiar name) rejoined the company, for it is the first remembrance I have of the amusing scenes that happened between himself and John Clarke. Although they were good friends, poor little Clarke could not help feeling a pang of jealousy whenever he found that his part did not seem to go so well as Jimmy's. On one of these occasions, when Rogers had had the lion's share of laughter, Clarke was heard to groan and mutter in an undertone throughout the evening. Some one who knew the cause remarked, "Never mind, the audience may to-morrow night be entirely with you ; it often happens so, you know ;" to which he replied, "It isn't jealousy, there's room enough for both of us ; but it does seem hard that when I have got a good thing to say, I find it received

only tolerably well, when if Jimmy exclaims 'How are you?' or 'Good-bye for the present,' the audience is convulsed. I can't understand it." Poor little Clarke! He did not see that it was not the words, but the way Jimmy delivered them. Clarke was a great favourite; but his heavy voice and manner were altogether different from Jimmy's, whose voice was light and thin. Clarke had a slow and ponderous way of speaking, with a kind of gruff drawl, while his rival's delivery was rapid and comically jerky. They differed, too, in features: Clarke's face was long, with a large nose, while Rogers had a small, round face, with a decided *nez retroussé*. Clarke had complained more than once that Rogers had always longer and better parts to act than he, so when the burlesque of *William Tell* was read to the company, it transpired that Clarke's part of Gesler was undoubtedly the better of the two. It was amusing to watch his face during the reading, and his delight at having much to say and do, and Rogers very little. Rogers was perfectly still, listened attentively, looking on the ground, and, when the reading was over, he said nothing, but went home.

One night, during the full-dress rehearsal of *William Tell*, we came to a scene in which Clarke and Jimmy had a duet. Clarke's voice was harsh, and often got painfully flat, especially when he had to dwell on a particular note. Rogers, on the contrary, sang in tune, and true. Clarke insisted that the key was different.

Mr. Ferdinand Wallerstein, the conductor of the orchestra, an old and dear friend of mine, assured him to the contrary, and they tried it over so often that everybody grew weary of waiting; Mr. Wallerstein exclaimed that "The key had not been changed (he ought to know), and he could not be kept there all night; that the voice was always at higher pitch at night," etc. Clarke, whose ear

was very defective, still declared that the key was *not* the same; Rogers kept perfectly silent, singing the duet over and over again, without showing the smallest sign of impatience or irritation. At last Clarke shouted in great anger, "It's a conspiracy! You've changed the key amongst you to oblige Mr. Rogers." Upon which Rogers remarked in the most quiet, placid manner, "It's all right —dear—boy—same—key—only—you're not so well to-night." Of course Clarke was furious, while Jimmy remained provokingly quiet, without the sign of a smile upon his face.

The night for production arrived. Clarke was full of excitement, and said to me, "This is a great opportunity for me, and Jimmy (who was playing the small part of Sarnem) will not in *this* piece have it all his own way." When they met in the green-room Clarke was a little uneasy at the comic appearance of Jimmy, who was dressed in black from top to toe, his wig and brows of the deadliest hue, but his face of an unearthly white. Clarke remarked, "Oh, of course the audience will be in fits at his appearance, but *that* won't last all night."

Everything began to Clarke's complete delight, for his part was going splendidly, and he never acted better. At last Jimmy's cue came to enter. He had a splendid reception, of course; Clarke was prepared for that; but after the applause which greeted Jimmy was over, there still was heard a titter all over the house, which continued through Clarke's speeches. He was at first under the impression that his own acting was the cause; but on turning round he saw that Jimmy had on a most extraordinary garment, which took the place of a shoulder-cape. It was only half a yard in width, of jet black, and began at the back of his neck; but the length of it no one ever knew, for it was never quite on the stage, and never quite

off. It was always in somebody's way, and we were constantly obliged to step over this never-ending, long, narrow, garter-like train, which seemed to be everywhere ; and when one or the other of us *did* happen to stand on it unconsciously, he would remark, in his quiet, sad way, "*You're on it, you're on it.*" Any one can imagine the effect this would have on an audience who knew the actor's ways so well. Whenever he had to go off, he left the end of this train behind him for some time, when all at once, in the middle of a scene and quite unexpectedly, the bit that was still in sight would suddenly disappear with a palpable jerk. By the time this had happened twice or thrice, the audience looked for its recurrence, and then laughed immoderately. Clarke was furious, and declared that it was all planned to annoy him. When they sang the duet over which they had such a discussion, the end of Jimmy's train was of course *off* the stage, and he had arranged that some heavy weight should be on the end of it which was out of sight, so that all through the duet it appeared as though some one was standing on the other end of it (a ripple of laughter going on amongst the audience all the while) ; Jimmy only now and then looked at the offending garment with a resigned and patient expression. When the duet was over the strain suddenly relaxed. The effect of this was that the whole house was convulsed with laughter. Clarke's indignation was indescribable. While the finale of the burlesque was sung by all the characters, Jimmy stood in the corner of the stage, with his long train arranged to reach the foot-lights. When the curtain fell, and all concerned were called before the curtain, Clarke insisted on going *before* Jimmy, and not *with* him. "He wasn't going to have his applause at such a moment interfered with by Jimmy's tomfoolery ; he might do what he liked with his absurd

train, *after* he had gone off." So on Clarke went. He was loudly cheered, and was smiling with supreme satisfaction as he crossed the stage, when, just as he was making his final bow, he tripped over the train, which Jimmy had carefully left, as it appeared before the curtain fell, close to the footlights. This created a roar from the house, and was the last straw to Clarke. He was afterwards heard to say that "There ought not to be two low comedians in one piece." The public did not agree with him.

Then came the *Miller and his Men*, described by its joint authors, Talfourd and Byron, as a burlesque *mealy-drama*. Another boy's part for me! This time I was relegated to the stables, as I had to play a groom, Karl, or, in the words of the authors, "An English tiger, from the wild jungles of Belgravia." The rival comedians—Clarke being Lothair, a virtuous peasant, and Rogers a forlorn old woman, Ravina—were still "both in the same piece." The rivals, of course, had all sorts of little troubles during the run, and especially on the last night of it. Rogers slipped off the stage towards the end, and as Clarke was speaking his final lines, just before the general chorus, a ripple of laughter ran through the house. Clarke mistook this for a tribute to himself, and was beaming with smiles, when suddenly a loud thunder-clap, and then a slow, tremulous, and rumbling noise was heard, followed by a roar of laughter; Clarke turned round, wondering what on earth was the matter, and saw Jimmy dressed as the ghost of Ravina, in a long white robe, a cap with an enormous frill, a pale, sad face, and carrying a lighted bedroom candle, rising through the clouds to the "ghost melody" from the *Corsican Brothers*. I need not say that not another word of the play or a note of the finale was heard. When the curtain fell and

Clarke had disappeared in positive anguish, Jimmy quietly remarked that he had arranged with the conductor of the orchestra and the carpenters a little surprise for the last night, feeling sure that it would greatly amuse the audience, and, above all, delight Clarke!

So far as I can tax a memory very imperfect as to dates, it was at this time that I had the good fortune to attract the notice of a once distinguished actress (as Miss Foote), but whom I, of course, only knew as the Dowager Countess of Harrington. She wrote to me to say that she had been several times to see me act, and that she felt obliged to tell me of the impression I had made upon her, asking "to be allowed to call on me." I was, of course, delighted.

My father had known her slightly when she was at her zenith, and would often speak of her as one of the loveliest and most amiable of women. He would recall not only the charm she possessed as an accomplished actress, but her good-nature to everybody, high and low, in the theatre. It will be needless for me to say how I looked forward to talking to her. She stayed a long time the first day she called, and I soon found that the account my father gave of her charm of manner had not been exaggerated.

My mother had never met Lady Harrington, but she soon grew much attached to one who became a true friend to me, and as time went on seemed more and more endeared to me. Lady Harrington would often speak of days gone by, and would assure me that she was *not* a great actress ; adding, "People were pleased to say I was charming, so I suppose I was." She must have been very beautiful when young, being still extremely handsome as an old lady. She was as good, too, as she was handsome ; and I can never forget her kindness to me.

When I was once seriously ill with an attack of bronchitis, Lady Harrington was unwearying in her attention to me, and would, day after day, sit by my bedside reading to me, and would bring with her all the delicacies she could think of. When I had sufficiently recovered my strength, she sent me to the seaside to recruit my health. To record all the kindnesses she bestowed on me and mine would fill up many pages, but my gratitude is indelibly written on my heart. She gave me a portrait of herself, as Maria Darlington in *A Rowland for an Oliver*, and by it one can see how lovely she must have been. Among her other gifts was a beautiful old-fashioned diamond and ruby ring, which she told me was given to her by the Earl (who was then Lord Petersham) when he was engaged to be married to her. She always called me by my second name, "Effie," and all her letters to me, of which I have a large number, are so addressed. If well enough, she rarely failed to be present on the first night of a new piece in which I acted; and if by chance prevented, would send old Payne, her butler, who had been her faithful servant for ever so many years, into the pit, and in the morning he was expected to go to her ladyship with a full account of my performance, and to say what I wore, and how I looked. Payne, for the purpose, took paper and pencil with him to write down all the particulars, as she loved to hear every detail. Lady Harrington was much attached to Payne, and also to her maid, who, I believe, had been in her service since she was quite young, and often spoke of them as *Romeo* and *Juliet*. She constantly expressed a wish to see me established as a comedy actress, and begged me to try hard for that position. To tell the truth, I must have been a great trouble at times to my kindly manager, for the fact of having acted successfully in two or three little

comediettas seemed more and more to whet my appetite. I recall many a happy visit to Richmond Terrace, and until her last illness I had no better friend than Lady Harrington. †

Like all Byron's clever burlesques, at this time *Aladdin* enjoyed great success. It was strongly cast and admirably played. Many of the old Strand audiences will recall Jimmy Rogers as the Widow Twankay, Aladdin's mother, who, to quote the Arabian Nights, "Even in her youth had not possessed any beauty."

There was no attempt to exaggerate in either dress or acting. When he entered with a woe-begone face and looked at the audience, nothing else was seen or heard for some seconds. But, however Jimmy might provoke his audience to laughter, he would not be tempted to laugh himself. I only saw this happen to him upon the stage once, and that was caused by a circumstance at which the most rigid must have given way.

This is the story. Very often during the run of *Aladdin*—and sometimes night after night—there sat in the middle of the pit a stout, bald-headed man, who appeared to be not only a faithful friend to the theatre, but a warm admirer of little Clarke, to whom he was a great comfort, for whenever Jimmy got more applause than Clarke thought was his share, his sheet-anchor was the bald-headed friend in the pit, who, when Clarke said or did anything to provoke applause, would laugh louder than anyone else, and, when the applause had quite subsided and everything was still, would shout at the top of his voice, "Bravo, Clarke!"

This happened so often that people began to tease Clarke about it, and even the audience would sometimes turn into ridicule this incessant cry of "Bravo, Clarke!" Clarke dearly loved praise, but when he found his bald-

headed admirer a little injudicious in his approval, he became uneasy. One night the owner of the hairless head, who had been waiting at the stage-door to see Clarke leave the theatre, stepped up to him and requested to be allowed to "have the honour of shaking hands with one for whom he had such sincere admiration." Clarke recognized his friend the moment he raised his hat, for he saw the familiar bald head shining under a gaslight, and shook hands with his admirer, who modestly said, "I'm sure you will remember me, sir, when I tell you that I am the person who so often sits in the middle of the pit, and I am so anxious that you should know how sincere is my admiration, that I call out, whenever I see an opportunity, 'Bravo, Clarke!'" This was a moment not to be lost. "I appreciate more than I can say," said Clarke, "your kind attention; and it is, I assure you, a welcome sound to me to hear your friendly voice. But, unfortunately, there are people who are ever ready to ridicule over-favouritism. Do you think you could throw in 'Bravo, Clarke' less frequently, and not in so marked a manner? Let it on no account cease altogether, only give it with more judgment." The man replied, "Certainly, sir; of course I will," and they parted. The next night the house was full as usual, and the bald head was again the centre-piece of beauty in the pit. All through the first scene the well-known voice was silent; one could see an anxious look gradually becoming more and more fixed upon Clarke's face. He glared again and again in the direction of the pit, but no "Bravo, Clarke!" greeted his anxious ears. At last, when Rogers, Clarke, and myself sang the trio which ended the scene, the familiar voice shouted repeatedly, to Clarke's horror, "Bravo, Rogers!" Clarke's face caught Jimmy's eye, who laughed to such a degree that the

tears rolled down his cheeks. Poor Clarke never forgot it; the more disgusted he looked, the more Rogers laughed. All this so amused us that it was with difficulty we managed to get through our parts; for throughout the evening this man, at unexpected moments, would cry out, "Bravo, Rogers!" giving, of course, fresh impetus to our laughter. This was the only time I ever saw Rogers laugh in the business of the scene, and then it was an impossibility for any one who understood the circumstances, and was not made of stone, to help it.

Then came *Esmeralda*, in which I played Pierre Gringoire; Rogers, who was always of delicate health, and now often very ill, played Claude Frollo; and Clarke, with a wonderful make-up, was Quasimodo. Occasionally, and sometimes on "benefit" nights, I now, to my delight, got other parts, notably Lucy Morton, originally played by Madame Vestris in Planché's charming little comedy, *Court Favour*, a performance of which the *Athenæum* spoke in these terms: "The *petite* figure of Miss Wilton is well suited to the half-infant character, and there is a subtlety in her style which gives piquancy to the dialogue between Lucy and the Duke of Albemarle, whom she so cunningly overreaches."

The next burlesque I acted in was, I think, Byron's parody on the *Colleen Bawn*, called *Miss Eily O'Connor*. I was cast for another boy—Myles-na-Coppaleen, in which I introduced a strong Irish brogue. Rogers was Miss Eily, and Clarke Danny Mann; two admirable performances, although poor Jimmy now suffered so much at times, that it was painful to see him waiting for his cue to go on the stage, but, somehow, the hearty welcome which always greeted him would be such a stimulant that, after awhile, he would act as if nothing were amiss. How little does an audience know what actors fight

against in the exercise of duty—how much pain they have been known to suffer bodily and mentally in order to go through their work! A true artist will never break faith with the public while still able to stand or speak. His sense of duty is paramount, and he must indeed be *in extremis* before he will desert his post. I am speaking of *artists* in the true sense, not of those who out of conceit adopt the theatrical profession as a pastime, and into whose consideration art seldom enters. One of the latter category succeeded in obtaining an engagement at the Strand Theatre while I was there, to play small parts. She had a pretty face, and, in her opinion, nothing more seemed necessary. One night this young recruit did not come near the theatre at all, and a substitute was hurriedly sent on for her part, which, fortunately, was limited to a few lines. The next evening the lady arrived at the usual time, making neither apology nor excuse, and offering no explanation of her absence. The stage-manager angrily inquired, "How is it you were not here last night?" "I could not come," she replied, staring with astonishment at his question. "Why?" he asked. "It rained," she answered. She was politely informed that, as our English weather was somewhat uncertain, and a foreign climate might perhaps suit her better, her services would be required no longer. She left the theatre saying, "It was a cruel profession to be expected to leave one's home on a night not fit to turn a dog out!"

Jimmy was often helped from his cab to his dressing-room, looking so ill and weak that I wondered his doctor did not insist upon his not coming (which, I believe, was frequently the case); but he was obstinate, and would not disappoint the public. There is something in the atmosphere of a theatre which picks one up, so to speak, and which seems to give one, for the time, almost super-

human strength. I have myself been taken from a sick-bed wrapped in blankets, accompanied by my doctor (protesting all the time), who was afterwards stationed at the side-entrance to the stage with drugs and restoratives to keep me up. I have known the most acute pains to disappear for the time, and the mere fact of one's thoughts running through another channel for some hours has frequently helped a speedy recovery. I have seen Jimmy rally to such a degree that it has made us wonder, and through it all he would be so quaintly funny, so sadly comic, that we could not resist smiling, forgetting for the moment how ill he was. There was a complete unconsciousness of his own power to make one laugh, which was more droll than I can describe. It was irresistible: a sad face with a curious undercurrent of humour—an odd, quiet look of surprise when the audience roared at him, and the more sadly surprised he appeared the more they laughed. He was the strangest mixture of combined fun and suffering I can remember. Jimmy was really a fair and generous actor, but could not resist the temptation to tease Clarke sometimes, who was, however, a great favourite, and held his own with the public for many years. He was very clever, and much liked by all of us as a kindly little man. In spite of his jealousies, and always looking on Jimmy as a formidable rival, he would feel deeply for him in his sufferings, and would have done anything in his power to help him. This Jimmy knew full well, and they were really fond of each other. When the play was over (as often happens with barristers after a "keen encounter of their tongues"), they might frequently have been seen walking from the theatre together arm in arm.

Soon after this I left the Strand Theatre and made a short engagement at the St. James', then under the manage-

ment of Mr. Frank Matthews. Poor Jimmy Rogers had also seceded from the Strand Theatre—it was evident that his health was becoming worse and worse. But, to the astonishment of all who knew him, he engaged himself to act in the *Heart of Midlothian*. I was delighted at the fact of meeting him again, but found him sadly changed, and looking like a faded photograph. I was shocked and pained when I held his poor, thin hand in mine, and gazed at his wan face and sunken eyes. I could see that the cruel, relentless malady, consumption, had slowly yet surely crept its way. My heart was too full of tears for me to utter a word of welcome, and when he looked at me with his sad smile, he could see that I dared not trust myself to speak. I forgot how long he acted his part of Effie Deans, but seeing him grow weaker and weaker every night made my duties very painful. It was such a ghastly mockery to act in burlesque with a man who was dying before my eyes! At last, one night I noticed him coming down slowly from his dressing-room, supporting himself by the banisters, and halting on every second or third step. I met him at the foot of the stairs, when he placed his hand upon my shoulder and seemed to breathe with great difficulty. I helped him towards the stage, and begged him to sit down; a chair was brought to him, but he declined, saying in broken sentences, “I dare not—I shall never—get up again.” He then whispered to me, “Marie, dear, help me through it to-night—do what you can for me—I am not well—dear—not at all well.”

Not well! No, poor fellow, the end was not far off. He had scarcely breath to speak. I said to him, “Oh, Jimmy, why did you come here to-night?” “My fault, dear,” he replied; “I would come. I shall be all right to-morrow.” His words had such an ominous sound.

He could only walk through the piece, leaning upon my shoulder when we were on the stage together. As I found his breath failing him, I either spoke his words or continued with my own. Towards the end of the piece his hands became cold, and his face so changed that my heart was sick with fear. The audience little knew that they were laughing at a dying man. How I managed to get through it all I don't know, but necessity makes us strong. I thought the end of the play would never come. He would allow no one but me to help or advise him; indeed, at moments he became fractious, and my task was truly painful. Just as the curtain fell he muttered, "Thank you, my dear; God bless you and help me!" He sank into a chair, and as I knelt by his side he looked strangely at me, and whispered, "I am dying." He was taken home, where his poor little wife, to whom he was devoted, had been anxiously waiting for his return. He would not, I heard, allow her to think that he was so ill as he felt, and insisted on going through his work to the last, in defiance of all advice. The end soon came, and his last words were, "The farce is over—drop the curtain." *Poor Jimmy!* You will ever be remembered by those who knew you best as a kind and generous friend. No one in trouble or in need ever sought your help in vain. "Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar?"

When James Rogers died, no one regretted his death more than his old friend and rival, John Clarke.

My engagement at the St. James' was soon over, when I was sent for by Mr. Webster to act for three or four weeks at the Adelphi in the *Little Treasure*.

This performance reminds me that when I had lost the title of Cupid, the epithet "Little" for a long time took

its place ; for I was in turn “The *Little Treasure*,” “The *Little Savage*,” “The *Little Sentinel*,” “The *Little Devil*,” and “*Little Don Giovanni*.”

There was an old member of the new Adelphi company, who, when I mention his name, will be remembered by many who knew him as an eccentric and amusing character of days gone by—Robert, but always known as “Bob” Romer. He was not an important actor, but such an oddity that without him the company would not have seemed complete, for everybody had an affection for him. Bob was ambitious, but never reached the summit (or anywhere near it) of his ambition. He was rarely, I believe, entrusted with more than a few lines, and constantly, when a new play was about to be produced, some friend would delight in asking him what his part would be in it. His reply would be always the same : “A—what have I got to do ? Oh—a—nothing—at all—in the first and second acts—and—a—next to nothing—in the last.” He spoke in quaint, rapid jerks, and, after a slight pause, his words would seem to try to get one before the other. I remember meeting him one morning when he had just left the theatre after rehearsing in a new piece. As I saw his portly figure coming along, I could not resist asking the well-worn question, “What have you got to do in the new play, Mr. Romer ?” “A—a—what—have I—got to do ? Oh—a—same old thing—nothing—a—nothing at all.” “Nothing at all ?” I replied. “A—well—a—the old story—a few—idiotic lines, and ‘exit.’ In the last—piece but one, I—a—was—a magistrate—nothing to do but—wear a wig—and—a—take it off again. In the next—I was—a—a—rustic—nothing to do—but—to drink the health of the Squire—in an empty jug—shout out ‘Hurray’—laugh ‘Ha ! ha !’—and go off—with a noisy crowd. A—in this piece

—I play—an Alligator.” “A what, Mr. Romer?” “An Alligator—curious—line of business. I’m discovered—a—a—at the beginning of this piece in a tank. All I have to say is ‘*Tan—ter—ran—tan—tan!*’ I don’t appear again till the last scene, when I say, ‘*Whack—fal—la!*’ It won’t—tax the brain much!” Poor “Bob” was the subject of much amusement to his comrades. He had one particular horror, that of coming up through trap-doors. He vowed he would leave the theatre if ever he was asked to appear through a trap. As Mr. Toole was in the company, I need not say that he took special delight in constantly measuring Bob for an imaginary trap in the coming play—a proceeding which he never got accustomed to, and always became excited over. Bob, when asked by a friend what his line of business in the theatre was, answered, “Oh—a—*etceteras.*” It was a fact that whenever a play was read by the author to the company, after giving out the list of characters and finishing with “etc., etc.,” Bob would be heard muttering *sotto voce*, “Ah—that’s—me.”

One more story of this quaint old gentleman will not, I hope, bore the reader. I remember an amusing scene occurring one morning as I arrived at the stage-door to attend a rehearsal, when I heard Bob questioning the hall-porter with a mysterious and puzzled expression in his face. First of all I must explain that on the previous day a little dinner had been given to him by a few friends in the company who desired to have a good joke at poor Bob’s expense, and to have one or two speeches about his untried talents, and to sympathize with his failure in ever getting a good part. The poor fellow rose to reply, and, after a lengthy speech, which, I believe, caused much suppressed but undetected laughter, he ended by saying, “A—I feel much touched by—your—a—sympathy; and

with regard to my—a—hidden ability—a—light under a bushel—I may say—if I am not important, I am at least—a—pleasing.”

This miniature banquet was kept up until ten o'clock, for Bob had not to appear on the stage before eleven, just to act one of his celebrated “next to nothing” parts. He had partaken rather freely of the wine, and was somewhat unsteady. When he awoke on the following morning, he had a vague recollection of the dinner, but, for the life of him, could not remember anything that happened afterwards, and his anxiety to find out how things went off at the theatre was very great. When I arrived at the stage-door, a conversation to this effect was going on between Bob and the hall-porter:

BOB: “A—good house—last night, Richardson ?”

PORTER: “Yes, sir; *very* good house.”

BOB: “A—nothing—went wrong at all ?”

PORTER: “Nothing, sir.”

BOB: “A—how did the farce go ?”

PORTER: “Not so well as usual, I was told, sir.”

BOB (*quickly*): “Not so well? How’s that?”

PORTER: “I did hear, sir, that it were ’issed.”

BOB: “Bless my soul! Was Mr.—a—Webster in the theatre ?”

PORTER: “He had gone ’ome, sir.”

BOB (*breathing more easily*): “Is he here this morning?”

PORTER: “Yes sir, just arrived.”

BOB: “A—did he—ask for me ?”

PORTER: “No, sir.”

BOB (*after cautiously looking round*): “About last night?—a—*was I here?*”

I returned to the Strand to re-appear as Orpheus, in Byron’s burlesque of *Orpheus and Eurydice*. During the following summer Mrs. Swanborough took her company

down to the Theatre Royal, Liverpool, where I first met Mr. Bancroft. We were playing in the burlesque of *Orpheus*, I remember, when some races were going on, and the winner of the Cup was called "Black Deer"; in the evening Mr. George Honey, who was playing black "King Pluto," introduced an unexpected joke in my scene with him. "Saucy boy! You've been to the races, it is clear." I was taken by surprise; but soon recovered, and replied, "Yes, and was a winner, too, you *Black Dear.*" The audience at once recognized the introduction, and received it with much laughter and applause. Mr. Honey, seeing that I had the best of it, added, "Oh, so I thought; well, long may you *reign, dear.*" This, being done on the spur of the moment, was more successful than if it had been pre-arranged.

I will end these reminiscences of early days with a story of my childhood, of which I was reminded during this visit to Liverpool.

One day I received a letter, which vividly recalled to my recollection (shall I ever forget it?) a remarkable journey I undertook years before, when I was but a mere child. The story, I fancy, will go far to prove that courage and determination were, even at that early age, strong points in my nature, although, in this instance, my youthful impetuosity might have led to serious complications. My father, with myself and three sisters, were in Scotland, while my mother, with two other tiny sisters, were in Lancashire, fulfilling an engagement. News came that she was seriously ill. I knew that her great anxiety would be about her children, and how she would wish them to be near her. What was to be done? My father had gone away some distance with the company he was attached to, to act somewhere, leaving us children in charge of the landlady. I made up my little mind to



take two of my sisters (one was mentally afflicted, and I dared not risk it) to my mother. But how, and by what means? I went to the pier, and found out that a boat was going to Glasgow that night. I learnt, also, that on the day of our arrival a steamer would leave Glasgow for Liverpool. I inquired all about the cost of the journey, and decided without any hesitation, knowing the chronic state of our finances, upon the cheapest part of the vessel. I turned it all over in my limited brain, which did not admit of room to consider risks, difficulties, and consequences; I only knew that our mother was ill, and if she should die without seeing us it would be a reproach to us all. I am ashamed to say that my father's anxiety and displeasure at the discovery of our departure on his return home never entered my already overcrowded mind. There was a small sum of money in the house, realized by an entertainment which he and I had given. This I took, and secured the tickets for myself and two sisters, who were too young to understand the meaning of my wild scheme. The boat was to start that night, and my next anxiety was how to leave the house without the knowledge of our landlady. (I can hear my readers say, "Was there ever so mad a proceeding?" And I agree with them.) My father frequently alluded to it, and with a grave shake of the head implied that he had not forgiven the terrible scare my proceeding cost him.

But to return. I packed all the things I thought necessary in a carpet-bag (our wardrobe was limited, so it did not take long), dressed myself and sisters, and waited till the family prayers had begun in the room below. When I heard the murmur of voices, we went downstairs as noiselessly as possible, carefully dropping the carpet-bag with a heavy thud, as is so often the case when one is doubly cautious. The noise, luckily, was not

heard, owing to the wind that was howling outside, and away we went to the boat, which was rocking about in troubled waters, and the sight of which would now turn my steps in an opposite direction; but youth knows no fear. We went on board. What a night it was! We were all very frightened, and one of my young sisters entreated to be allowed "to get out and walk!" My task to cheer them, and bear the consequences of a rough passage, must be understood, for I cannot describe it. On our arrival at Glasgow, I made the terrible discovery that my pocket had been picked, and every penny of my poor possessions gone. I was completely heartbroken, and did not know which way to turn, for I had nothing left to pay for our journey to Liverpool.

In the greatest despair I inquired my way to the ship we were to go by, and then asked to see the captain, or some one who would help us to get to our journey's end. When I told my little story, the captain laughed, and said how naughty I had been, and that he thought it was his duty to send me back to my father; but when I cried, and explained how ill my mother was, he seemed touched, and said, "Well, you are, at this stage of your journey, almost as near to your mother as to your father, so I'll take you to her. But I daren't bring you along as passengers: if you don't mind coming aboard with those who go free, you know, to Liverpool (why didn't he say paupers? but I suppose he hesitated to wound my feelings), why, it can be done, and I'll get a pass for you. What is your name?" I did not answer at once, and he evidently understood, for he immediately said, "I'll put it down as Briton, for few little girls could be so brave as you are; so you deserve the name of Briton, and I'll give it you." He patted me on the head, and knowing that my money had been stolen, and I could get no dinner, he

gave us sandwiches. When night came we three little waifs were placed on shore amongst the paupers, and when the name "Briton" was called, I went on board with a little sister by each hand. The captain, as we passed, patted me on the head. I looked up at him, and, I am not sure, but if it had been daylight, I think I should have seen tears in his eyes. It was a rough night again and as I sat down in the cabin, which was full of tobacco-smoke, I felt that if we remained there we should be very ill; so I planted myself with the two children on the steps, where we could get air. By-and-by, the language amongst "the free passengers" became so dreadful that I covered the children's heads with their coats to prevent their hearing, and they went to sleep. I felt very unhappy and began to cry as I realized what a rash thing I had done. Presently one of the ship's officers, quite young-looking, came along, and, seeing me cry, stopped and spoke to me. He soon discovered that we were different from our surroundings, and took us to his own cabin, where he left us, only now and again peeping in during the night to see if we were all right. In the morning he brought us some breakfast, and, when we arrived at Liverpool, the captain instructed him to take us to an address which I gave him of a great friend of my father's family, Mr. Warne, a lime merchant, who told the young seaman my name, and who we were. He then took charge of us, and sent us on comfortably enough to my mother, who was at Wigan. The unexpected sight of her children frightened my mother, but it certainly had the effect of causing a revulsion, because she was much better the next day. My father was immediately communicated with, and the whole proceedings related to him. He also learnt that the confusion in the house when it was discovered that we had gone was indescribable. The next day the bellman, or

crier, was shouting everywhere, "Oh yes! Oh yes! Lost, stolen, or strayed," etc. My father, hastily summoned home, was almost deprived of reason by a fruitless search. He threatened to punish the landlady for her neglect, and the whole affair caused a terrible commotion. When my father received news of our safety, the reaction made him very ill for some days. So I had much to answer for. Now for the sequel to this story. The writer of the note I received was the very man who had rescued me and my young sisters from the society of the "free passengers," and had watched us with such tender care on that memorable night. When he called to see me I welcomed his kindly face with sincerity. Later on, having made a position for himself in one of the colonies, he asked me to become his wife. I wished I could have said "Yes," for a man with such a heart must have made a good husband. My feelings, however, were those of gratitude and not love. How largely life is made up of accidents! How, I wonder, would my marrying him have affected my own and my husband's fate?

CHAPTER IV.

HOW AND WHY I BECAME A MANAGEE.

I now come to the point where I have to tell how it came about that I was ever the manager of a London theatre. While greatly exercised in my mind with regard to the future, and very anxious to better my prospects, I one morning called, in a casual way, on my sister, Mrs. Francis Drake, and talked over my position, as I had often done before, for she and her husband knew well my anxiety to act comedy. *What* to do for the best, or *how* to do it, I could not imagine. My brother-in-law advised me to write to the leading managers, who then, it must be remembered, were few in number, and theatres where my services might be useful could be almost counted on the fingers of one hand, for an engagement to play comedy. I told him that I had done so several times only to meet with refusals. Mr. Buckstone replied that if I would continue burlesque he would give me an engagement at once, as he could only associate me with "the merry sauciness of that wicked little boy Cupid." I was in despair, and did not know what to do. Mr. Drake then, after a pause, said, "I see no chance for you but management. How would it be if you had a theatre of your own?" A dead silence ensued. I looked at my sister, and she looked at me. My heart seemed to stop beating, and, like a lull after a storm, everything for

the moment appeared to stand still. The mere thought of such a thing was bewildering. I could not realize the position, and thought I must be dreaming. My sister, who was always sanguine about anything I undertook, said, "Yes, that is what you must do." I thought they were mad, and, after looking hard at them both to assure myself that they were not dangerous, I murmured, "But the money! I can't take a theatre without money, and you know I haven't a penny in the world." Mr. Drake answered, "Come again to-morrow morning; in the meantime Emma and I will talk the matter over, and see what can be done." What could they mean? All that night I dreamt of nothing but crowded houses, and money rolling in so fast that I couldn't hold it. The next day I kept my appointment to the moment, wondering what would be proposed. Mr. Drake said, "I will lend you a thousand pounds if you can find a theatre to let for a time; should you succeed, you will return the money; if you fail, I will lose it. Should it prove a big success, you can pay a liberal interest, which I will give as a present to your mother." My sister added laughingly, "Come, Marie, don't be nervous; you are sure to succeed. Remember the old witch, who said that everything you undertake you are bound to prosper in. You are very lucky for others, why not try for yourself?"

Apropos of this remark, perhaps a little story which prompted it may be interesting. Years ago, one evening when my mother and I were chatting over the past, present, and future, she related to me an incident in which, although it occurred when I was only a few weeks old, I played the principal part. One night, in a little out-of-the-way Yorkshire village, my mother was aroused by my crying and moaning; her efforts to soothe me were unavailing, and in the morning she found

that my little body was completely covered with finger-and-thumb marks, as if I had been pinched. A doctor was sent for, but his prescriptions were useless. The next day an old peasant woman coming up the garden to sell her wares was attracted by my mother's sad face as she hushed me in her arms. "What's t' matter wi' t' bairn?" she asked. My mother, who was little more than a girl herself, answered, "My baby, I fear, is going to die;" upon which the old woman replied, "Nay, nay, p'r'aps not; let's ha' a look at t' bairn." When she saw the strange marks, she exclaimed, "Don't ee cry no more, ma lass; gi' thanks, for t' bairn's bewitched!" "What!" screamed my mother, nearly dropping me. "T' bairn's bewitched, I tell thee; at sunset those marks will disappear, and 'twill be the luckiest bairn you ever know'd of: she'll tell o' things afore they come to pass, and bring good to them she wishes to, and woe to them as wrongs her." The old woman seemed quite tragic for the moment, and begged for a scrap of my hair, saying, "Put it into t' bairn's hand that *she* may gi' it to me hersen."

The woman went away rejoicing, stopping to look back once or twice as she passed up the road. The marks disappeared as she had prophesied, for I need scarcely say my mother, being young and credulous, watched the clock and the departing sun. The report spread quickly; for the next morning, and frequently, until we went away, the village tradesfolk would call to kiss me, which they said would bring them a good day; and as they left the house would look with envy at my mother, and exclaim, "Wonderful, missus!" (which expression has been for years a sort of joke in my family, and to this day when anything surprising occurs, it is met with the exclamation, "Wonderful, missus!"). I

can well remember when but a child being often asked to post letters which contained requests—the sender declaring they would then be surely granted. I have had little gifts simply to speak to tradespeople in their shops, and even now many with whom I deal avow that whenever I have called they have had "a busy day." My poor mother grew superstitious, she told me, from the moment the old woman's prophecy came true.

But to resume. Of course a thousand pounds at that time went further than that sum would now, and it seemed to me such a big fortune that all the theatres in London might be taken with it. Among other friends, I told my news to Mr. Byron, who I knew was about to sever his connection with the Strand Theatre. He thought it would be a very dangerous experiment, but I urged that, if I failed, I should at least have the opportunity of showing the managers what I could do, and might afterwards have less difficulty in getting an engagement.

Being now quite resolved upon my speculation, I proposed a partnership, if a theatre could be found, Mr. Byron to give me his exclusive services as an author. As he was not in a position to provide money, he stipulated to be indemnified from sharing any losses that might occur. I felt that some such arrangement would greatly strengthen my position, knowing Mr. Byron's popularity, and his expressed willingness to write comedies. Then arose the difficulty where to find a suitable theatre?

This theatre had gone through strange and varied fortunes, and had been known by many names since its title "The King's Concert Rooms," when first built by Signor Pasquale, the father of the once celebrated singer. Among its former lessees was Mr. Brunton, the father of

the celebrated Mrs. Yates, the mother of Edmund Yates. The beautiful Mrs. Nisbett also once held the reins, while Madame Vestris and Madame Celeste were frequent stars there; it having, besides, been the first English home of the French plays, and there the great Frédéric Lemaître first acted in this country. But, in spite of such attractions, it then knew little else than evil days, and for many years had become again quite a minor theatre.

I was implored by every one I consulted to reflect before entering upon such an enterprise. "The neighbourhood was awful," "The distance too great from the fashionable world," and "Nothing would ever make it a high-class theatre." People shrugged their shoulders, and I could see that failure was foretold in every feature. So I stood alone, without one word of encouragement. Mr. Byron grew less sanguine, and entreated me, before proceeding further, to go with him and talk the matter over with an old and valued friend, Mr. J. M. Levy, whose sound, practical judgment and kindly feeling we might rely on. I told my story, Mr. Levy seemed pleased with my courage, and was altogether favourably inclined towards the undertaking. He thought, at the same time, it would be wise for me to appear in burlesque, for at least the start, and not to risk losing that following of the public which had been accustomed to see me in that class of play. He suggested that Mr. Byron might then write a comedy, and give me the opportunity I sought, and, if successful, I could gradually abandon burlesque altogether.

I went home determined to follow this good advice, and invented for my managerial motto, "*Du courage et de la bonne humeur.*" An arrangement was entered into with Mr. James for a period of two years, to commence at Easter, by the terms of which he was to receive twenty

pounds a week for rental and his services as acting-manager combined; while Mr. Byron and myself were each to draw a weekly salary of ten pounds, and I was to receive an additional ten pounds a week towards the repayment of the sum to be advanced. After these deductions we were jointly to share all profits. Mr. Drake introduced me to the London & Westminster Bank, St. James's Square, on January 21st, 1865, when an account was opened in my name, with the sum he had agreed to advance. The formal receipt for the thousand pounds (which was returned to me when I had repaid the money) bears the same date.

The text of the document I signed indemnifying Mr. Byron from all pecuniary risk (which will be further alluded to when our story reaches the dissolution of partnership between Mr. Byron and myself) was as follows: In consideration of one thousand pounds advanced by me for preliminary and after expenses attending the decorating, advertising, payment of salaries, etc., of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, I am to receive ten pounds a week for two years, in addition to a salary which will be equal to yours. By this arrangement the thousand pounds will be paid me back by the end of the second year; this sum of ten pounds to come out of the profits of the theatre; should the weekly receipts fall below the expenses, the ten pounds to be paid out of the previous profits, so long as there are any to draw upon. At the end of our tenancy, should the thousand pounds be lost, or any portion thereof, I am not to have any claim on you for said sum, as the venturing of the money is voluntary on my part. Your salary is to be the same as mine, in consideration of your joint management, stage managerial duties, and writing of pieces. All publishing and acting rights of our pieces being jointly my property with

you, during our management. All money taken at the theatre is to be banked in our joint names, and to be our joint property." We then began our operations, and the days were taken up in preparing for our venture. One night, while the old Queen's was still in existence, Mr. and Mrs. Byron and myself occupied a private box, and saw the performance. It was a well-conducted, clean little house, but oh, the audience! My heart sank. Some of the occupants of the stalls (the price of admission was, I think, a shilling) were engaged between the acts in devouring oranges (their faces being buried in them) and drinking ginger beer. Babies were being rocked to sleep, or smacked to be quiet, which proceeding, in many cases, had an opposite effect! A woman looked up to our box, and seeing us staring aghast, with, I suppose, an expression of horror upon my face, first of all "took a sight" at us, and then shouted, "Now, then, you three stuck-up ones, come out o' that, or I'll send this 'ere orange at your 'eds." Mr. Byron went to the back of the box, and laughed until we thought he would be ill. He said my face was a study. "Oh, Byron!" I exclaimed, "do you think that people from the West End will ever come into those seats?" "No, he replied, "not *those* seats." Of course he made jokes the whole evening. One woman in the stalls called out to another, "I say, Mrs. Grove, 'ere's one for you," at the same time throwing a big orange, upon which Mr. Byron remarked, "Nice woman, Mrs. Grove. *Orange Grove!*!" I think, if I could, I would have at that moment retired from my bargain, but the deed was done, and there was no going back from it.

We had possession of the theatre for a month, during which brief time it had to be taken very much to pieces, cleaned, painted, re-seated, re-decorated, furnished, and it was not pleasant to see the money gradually getting

less and less, for the bills were paid every week. Mr. James was very kind, and helped me to go about everything as cheaply as possible; and when he came every Saturday with bills to be paid, or sums advanced to the builder and decorator, the upholsterer, or the gas-fitter, he would say, in his peculiar falsetto voice, "The poor thousand pounds is becoming smaller by degrees, and beautifully less." By the time the theatre opened I had about £150 left.

Agreeing with my wish to rechristen the theatre, which in its long career had borne so many titles, Mr. Byron applied through the Lord Chamberlain's office for permission to call it the Prince of Wales's Theatre, the name which I myself had chosen. His Royal Highness graciously consented.

When the speculation was really resolved upon, among the first friends I told of it was one who for years had been so kind to me, and who had shown such interest in my welfare—the Countess of Harrington. As one, at least, of many letters to me should have a place in this book, I will choose her reference to my important undertaking :

"Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, Feb. 18, 1865.

"MY DEAR EFFIE,—

"I was told of a little paragraph in the newspapers about your having taken a theatre, but not having heard of it from *you*, I did not believe the report. I need scarcely assure you of my sincere good wishes for your success, and I am delighted to hear that you are to have the kind and friendly support of your sister's husband in your undertaking.

"I remember the little *Queen's Theatre* years and years ago, when I resided near Russell Square.

"It is a great card having secured Mr. Byron to your-

self; I have just read his clever and entertaining novel with great enjoyment. Since the last week of November, when I saw you at the little Strand, I have not been to a theatre, except to one morning performance of the Covent Garden pantomime to take my dear grandchildren, as, after my attack of bronchitis, I am obliged to be very careful about going out in the evening. I shall hope soon to be able to take a peep at you, dear wee manageress, when you are on your throne at your royal domain ; till when and ever,—I am, your very affectionate friend,

MARIA HARRINGTON.”

Mr. Wooler, a well-known writer of comediettas, sent me a one-act play, entitled *All's Fair in Love and War*, to read, which I thought just suited for a *lever de rideau*. Mr. Byron and I agreed to accept it, but suggested changing the title, which we thought too long, Byron remarking that “it would require two play-bills to show it!” Mr. Wooler rechristened his piece *A Winning Hazard*; the strangeness of the coincidence did not at the time strike me, but afterwards, when our success seemed assured, we laughingly remarked that it was, to say the least, a curious incident that the curtain should rise on my venture with those words.

Mr. Wooler was a most eccentric man, and formed strong likes and dislikes, which he was at no pains to disguise. One morning, as he entered the theatre to attend a rehearsal of his little play, he encountered a member of the company towards whom his feelings were the reverse of amiable; as they passed they saluted one another, and Mr. Wooler gruffly muttered, “How do you do?” The other responded, “Quite well, thank you ;” upon which Mr. Wooler said quickly, “Oh, don't thank me! I don't care how you are ; I only asked for form's sake.”

When my little company first met for rehearsals I noticed a changed manner in several of my brother and sister artists. Because I was a manager they appeared to expect that I should be different towards them. I begged them not to think this, and asked for their good wishes and kindly help, assuring them that, although I now held the reins, they would find I should never cease to consider them my good friends, and that we should all drive abreast, not one before the other. Throughout the whole of my twenty years' management I hope I kept my word. Well, the opening night was fast approaching, and my work was very hard. Day after day I was in the theatre from ten in the morning until late at night, eating when I could, for I had rehearsals to attend, to direct the dresses for the new burlesque which had been written for the opening, to look after the painters and decorators, and to study my own part; so it may be believed that I had enough to do, and became more and more anxious as the eventful night approached.

When Mr. Byron read his burlesque, a member of the company, who I then met for the first time, was present, and during the reading I observed that about every three or four seconds he distinctly winked; after this had been going on for some time I began to feel exceedingly uncomfortable. At last I left the room, and called Byron out; he saw that I was very much annoyed, and I immediately told him that I was sure Mr. —'s conduct had been, all through the reading, abominably rude. Byron asked me what he had done. I explained that the actor had done nothing but wink at other members of the company: that I bore it as long as I could, but when he deliberately looked at me and winked *vigorously*, I could stand it no longer. I continued: "He must not remain in the theatre! I won't allow him to act! Give the part

to some one else. He is the most impertinent fellow I ever met! Wherever did he come from? Do send him away, Byron!" Byron went off into a fit of laughter, and then explained to me that it was a nervous affection of the eye, which had, he said, a very funny effect on the stage, in comic parts. I gradually became accustomed to this curious affection, but I shall certainly never forget the first impression it made upon me.

I will here relate a strange incident which occurred on the afternoon of the opening night; it will interest the superstitious, and amuse the sceptic. My mother, who was almost prostrate with nervousness, would not go to the theatre on the first night; but my father, I am glad to say, was present. My sister, Mrs. Drake, proposed to take my mother for a country drive to distract her thoughts; so they went into the neighbourhood of Willesden. My sister talked about all sorts of things, but to no purpose; she could see that my mother's thoughts were with me in Tottenham Street. At last, failing to secure her attention, Mrs. Drake turned the subject of conversation to me, which seemed to please her. "Mary has always been fortunate," my mother said (although I was christened Marie Effie, she loved the name of Mary, and always called me by it); "but her luck may desert her in this enterprise; she is so venturesome, poor girl! What would I not give to know the end of this undertaking!"

She raised her eyes, and there, on a direction-stone, as they turned a corner in the road, she saw, "*Mary's Place, Fortune Gate.*" It was to my mother like an answer to her wish, and impressed her so much that she afterwards often spoke of it. Curiosity took me to the neighbourhood later on, where I saw and read the prophetic words. Years afterwards, when our book first appeared,

this stone came into my possession and now has a place in our house.

The hour for launching the little ship arrived; of course there was a great crowd outside the theatre, and the inhabitants of Tottenham Street had, doubtless, never seen such a display of carriages before. The public, who were anxiously waiting for the doors to open, little knew that, but five minutes before they entered, I was standing on a high stool in a private box nailing up the last lace curtain. The house looked very pretty, and, although everything was done inexpensively, had a bright and bonnie appearance, and I felt proud of it. Curtains, carpets, in fact all the appointments, were of the cheapest kind, but in good taste. The stalls were also blue, with white lace antimacassars over them. This was the first time such things had ever been seen in such a theatre.

I remarked to Mr. Byron, just before the doors were opened, "I am glad I chose pale blue for the prevailing colour; it looks pretty, don't you think so?" He answered, "Yes, let us hope we shall not, by-and-by, look pale blue too; *that* wouldn't be pretty."

When I began to dress I was almost too tired to stand, for I had been all day looking after everything and everybody. However, as the moment approached for my first appearance as a manager, the excitement roused me; and when my cue came, I went on to my own little stage without exhibiting any sign of fatigue. It would be affectation to pretend that I did not know I was already a great favourite with the public, although the warm welcome I received almost overpowered me, but soon added force to my acting.

Byron was full of congratulations after the first scene, and, even in the midst of such excitement, could not resist making a joke. When I hurriedly asked him

what the audience thought of the appearance of the theatre, he replied, "Everybody is delighted. Some charming people in the stalls; a very nice Scotch family in the front row. I don't know them, but I'm sure they're Scotch." "How?" I asked. "Because I heard a lady say, 'Oh! there's *Aunt Mac-Assar!*'"

After it was all over several well-wishers came round to congratulate me, and while this was going on, the first night's receipts were handed to me. I never before had held so much money in my hands all at once, and what to do with it I did not know. Mr. Byron had just gone, and had forgotten to give me any directions about it. I dared not take the money home; I felt sure that robbers would come in and steal it in the night! At length a mutual friend, Mr. Albert Levy, who will well remember the circumstance, volunteered to take charge of it. I gratefully accepted the proposal, and handed him the money, wrapped in a silk handkerchief, which was returned on Monday and banked. When I was leaving the theatre to go home, there was a woman with a basket of oranges still standing outside, who, when she saw me, exclaimed, "Well, if these is your haristocrats, give me the roughs, for I've only took fourpence!" I must not omit to say that from the time I opened the theatre, I placed (besides the ten pounds a week I have alluded to) such sums of money as I could spare towards the payment of my debt to Mr. Drake, for I was more than anxious to restore to him what then seemed to me a gigantic sum. I allowed myself very little to live upon, and as I could afford no luxury in the way of dress, I went into complimentary mourning for economy's sake—a coloured dress was always recognizable, a black one never.

So commenced my management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre. I have tried to tell *why* I became a manager

and *how*. Let me add that not one shilling further was ever borrowed by me from, or given to me by, any one, living or dead, in connection with this enterprise. I was successful in a modest way from the very first, and gradually, but surely, my lucky star led me on to fortune.

END OF NARRATIVE.

A COLLECTION OF STORIES, ANECDOTES,
AND LETTERS.

The Prince of Wales's Theatre.

Mr. Wooler, the author of the little opening play, came into the green-room one night to express his delight at the successful start of the theatre ; he had been dining out, I fancy, for he appeared to be not quite himself (not an unusual occurrence with poor Mr. Wooler!), and he remarked that he liked everything but the first piece, which he condemned as "rubbish." The poor gentleman, having changed the title in a hurry, had forgotten that he was its author, and remarked, "You should have accepted, *All's Fair in Love and War*, a much better play." After he left I related the little scene to Byron, who was immensely amused : I said, "Ah, well, he was full of congratulations !" to which Byron replied, "Full of congratulations ! I thought it was liquor!"

My dressing-room at the Prince of Wales's Theatre was originally close to the stage-door, and I could easily hear all that was going on there. The hall-keeper, who was a most eccentric character, named Kirby, and at the same time a very excellent servant, would always carry out his orders in a conscientious manner. The carpenters were often sadly neglectful in wiping their feet as they passed through the hall to the stage, and as there was a huge mat placed for that purpose, Kirby was instructed to insist upon their doing so. He had a habit of singing to himself a great deal, and would often interperse his dialogue with the words of some favourite song. While dressing one night I overheard the following scraps of conversation, Kirby speaking always in a sleepy, drawling voice :

1ST CARPENTER: "Cold night, Kirby, ain't it ? "

KIRBY: "Hawful cold" ("I'm sitting on the stile, Maree.") "Wipe your feet."

2ND CARPENTER: "'Ow are yer, Kirby ? "

KIRBY: "All right, George" ("Where we sat side by side"). "Wipe your feet, George."

3RD CARPENTER: "'Ave you got change for sixpence, Kirby ? "

KIRBY: "No, I hain't" ("The night you promised long ago"). "Wipe your feet."

4TH CARPENTER: "Wet night, Kirby ; kind o' weather wot will bring up the vegetables and everythink."

KIRBY: "I'ope it won't bring up my three wives" ("You said you'd be my bride"). "Wipe your feet, 'Arry."

During one evening I remember Byron coming to me and asking if I would suggest to Mr. Montgomery, who was a very tall man with a long neck, to wear a "stick-up" instead of a "turn-down" collar; adding, in his quaint way, "That neck of his, you know, is such a nuisance; any neck after eight inches becomes monotonous."

Mr. Hare's subsequent career encourages me to refer to his *début* as the Landlord Short, in *Naval Engagements*. Mr. Byron, as usual, would drag in a joke, and at rehearsal one day remarked to him, "So wise to appear first of all in a part suited to you. Short figure, short name, short part; the critics will say, 'Mr. Hare, a clever young actor, made his first bow to a London audience, and was most excellent: in Short, perfect.'" "Yes," said Mr. Hare: "but what will happen if they don't like me ?" "We'll rechristen the piece 'SHORT Engagements.'" Fortunately for him, and for us, Mr. Hare's subsequent brilliant successes have more than justified my choice of him as a young recruit. Two

other funny remarks apropos of this programme I recall. On the first night of the new burlesque, "little" Clarke, as usual playing the heroine, Lucia, came exultingly into the green-room, and said to the author, "I had such a reception! did you hear the cheer?" "Plainly," said Byron, "*Lu-cheer!*"

At one of the rehearsals of Byron's *A Hundred Thousand Pounds*, Mr. Dewar had to say, "I give up my claim and waive my title" (retiring with the words up the stage). After remaining there some time, he called out to Byron, "I'm a long while up here with nothing to say. What am I supposed to be doing?" He was immediately answered, "My dear fellow, you are *Waiving your Title!*"

The first act was so clever and complete, being, in fact, a play in itself, that the rest seemed weak in comparison. The strength of the opening left little or no chance for the next two acts; but it was a well-written play. After the first scene Byron came into the green-room and asked if he could have something to drink, as the agitation had made his mouth "horribly dry." I pointed to the little filter which was always kept on a table, and said, "That is all there is, Byron." To which he answered, "That will do quite well; I will be content with what both peer and peasant alike—*dislike*."

I must here record another of the author's jokes. During the rehearsals, Mr. Dewar was anxious to know how he could make a distinct change in his appearance. He had worn light wigs and dark wigs, grey wigs and bald wigs; so one morning, after having been in the property-room, where a great deal of dust was about, through some alterations that were going on, his face having got besmeared with some of it, he went up to Byron and asked him to advise him about his make-up for the major. "You

see," said Mr. Dewar, "I want to make a complete change. Some have advised me to wear reddish hair mixed with grey; but what shall I do with my face?" Byron looked at him seriously, and said, "I should wash it."

It was during the run of this piece that a sad gloom came over my home. My dear mother, who had been ailing for some time, but whose health had not yet caused us real anxiety, as she had never been strong, seemed to become weaker and weaker. She was so afraid of giving me uneasiness in the midst of my work, that she hid her sufferings from me as long as she was able; but it became evident to all of us that she was enduring much pain. We were under engagements at the close of the season, which was rapidly approaching, to take our company to Liverpool and Manchester; but before going, our doctor assured me that my mother's illness was not of an alarming nature, that it was a question of time, and that I was not to be uneasy. This put my heart at rest, and knowing that she was surrounded by my sisters, who nursed and watched her night and day with loving care, I was able to go away comparatively satisfied.

Before starting, we were told that there was a sort of epidemic at Liverpool; so several of us decided to live at Waterloo, a pretty seaside place a few miles off, where the train could take us every night after the performance was over. We occupied villas facing the sea, and formed quite a little colony of our own, including Mr. Robertson (who came down for the purpose of finishing and producing his new comedy, *Ours*, Mr. and Mrs. Byron, Mr. and Mrs. Hare, my sister Augusta, myself, and Mr. Bancroft. We spent a delightful six weeks there. The Liverpool assizes were on at the time, and several barristers whom he knew were there on circuit. Mr.

Aspinall, the then Recorder of Liverpool; kindly Mr. (afterwards Sir) John Holker, who had already, by his brilliant talents, earned the position of leader of the Northern Circuit, the familiar members of which body knew him best as "Sleepy Jack"; Mr. W. R. McConnell, now Revising Barrister of Liverpool; Mr. Leofric Temple, Mr. Walter Bacon, and Mr. W. S. Gilbert, then a briefless barrister. We often made up a party to go to St. George's Hall to hear cases in which some of them were concerned, and I hope my friend Mr. Gilbert will forgive my telling a little story against him which occurred on the day he was going to make his maiden speech in prosecuting an old Irishwoman for stealing a coat.

He was very anxious about his first essay, and we all assembled to hear it. Mr. Gilbert tried for a long time to speak, but the old woman interrupted him so persistently that he could not get a word in edgeways, with such polite remarks as, "Hold your tongue!"—"Shut up, yer spaldeen!"—"Ah, if ye love me, sit down!"—"It's a lie, yer honour!"—"Hooroo for ould Ireland!" etc. She jumped about and made such a noise every time Mr. Gilbert attempted to speak, that the Judge ordered her to be taken down until the next day; and as she left the dock, the prisoner made a grimace at Mr. Gilbert, which I will not attempt to describe! So, after all, the maiden speech never came off, and I fear we were all immensely amused at Mr. Gilbert's discomfiture. A little later on we were told that Mr. Bacon had received his first brief; the case was to be heard at once, and he had hardly a moment to read it. We rushed off to the court in order not to miss it, and were waiting anxiously, when, by-and-by, a mutual friend came to us to say that Mr. Bacon, on opening the brief, found it to be a *pig* case, and no one could induce

him to have anything to do with it, so he had handed it over to some one else.

Poor Mr. Bacon (or "Streaky," as he was called by his companions) was a victim to chaff for a long time afterwards. Our legal friends came down to Waterloo once every week, and the evenings were dedicated to entertainments improvised by ourselves. We had several mock trials, in which Mr. Hare was always condemned to the ignominious position of representing the criminal in the dock. It was interesting to hear the clever speeches, all about nothing, delivered by these rising young barristers. I was sometimes the Judge, and gave imitations of the various gentlemen I had seen on the Bench. My robe was a pink wrapper, and my wig made of cotton-wool. On one occasion, for variety, we got up a mock opera, in which I was the *prima donna*, Mr. Gilbert the lover, Mr. Hare his rival, with large cloak, broad-brimmed hat, and knives and daggers all over him ; Mr. McConnell was the *prima donna's* father, whom he made a deaf old man, so that we were obliged to shout all our recitatives at him through an improvised ear-trumpet. The opera was sung throughout in Italian gibberish, and was a most amusing bit of foolery.

Our audiences were small but appreciative, for they included both Mr. Byron and Mr. Robertson ; I never saw them laugh so much in my life. We were all young then, and the fun, perhaps, appeared greater than it would now, but it was a very happy time. Some of those pleasant friends are gone, alas ! never to return.

From time to time I received letters from my mother, written by one of my sisters and only signed by herself ; though still very ailing she was cheerful, and counting the days for my return. These letters made me feel contented and happy, but I longed to be near her again.

Towards the end of our tour, while we were acting at Manchester, and when I was looking forward to soon going home, one morning (shall I ever forget it?) I received a letter from an old and valued friend of my family, Mr. T. W. Erle, who had undertaken the sad duty of revealing to me the true and fatal nature of my mother's illness. It had been thought prudent to disguise the facts from me as long as possible, but he felt that it would be wrong to keep me in ignorance of the truth any longer, and therefore, as gently and tenderly as he could, he broke the miserable news to me.

My darling, patient mother was fading gradually away from us, and in a short time would leave a blank which could never be filled up. There is not a grateful, loving daughter in the world who will not realize what my feelings were as I read this wretched letter, for her loss meant much to me. My sisters' task was a painful one, for not only had they watched her day and night, but were told to be cheerful in my mother's presence, and not to let her think her malady a fatal one, as suspicion of the truth would hurry on the end. When I reached home I saw the terrible change. Death was coming nearer and nearer, and seemed to chill the house, which already felt empty.

The time arrived when it was considered imperative for her to be made aware of her real state. It was a terrible day for us all. She bore her sentence with quiet resignation, and when we entered the room, she smiled sadly, and said, "I have received my death-warrant; but I implore you not to give way to grief: be brave, and help me to meet the end."

One day, soon after, she and I were alone; I was seated on a stool at her feet, and in her half-delirium her mind wandered back to the past, and recalled the time when I

was but a child. "Working so hard," she murmured, with her eyes closed, and this recollection seemed to pain her.

During the last act of *Ours*, Mr. Clarke, who then played Hugh Chalcot, had to say, "What a charming girl! how interesting! no father, no mother." The speech had always given me a pang, but on one particular night, when he came to the words "no mother," a cold shudder came over me, and I became faint. Directly the comedy was over, I hurried to the sick-bed, with a horrible dread upon me. My sister, Mrs. Fletcher, met me at the door to prepare me for a great change, and to tell me that the end was near. My father and my sisters were all with her, and my mother looked at me as if to say, "I have waited for you." The hour came to bid an eternal farewell: but those moments of supreme grief are too sacred to record. How lonely and desolate I felt! I had lost that best of friends, from whose love I often sought and surely found true sympathy. How I wish that she had been spared to share the good fortune she predicted for me. The modest comfort she enjoyed might have increased to some luxury in her old age (for she was still young when she died). It would have been such a happiness to all her children.

My mother had always a great horror, which I inherit, of being buried in the earth, and my next and last duty was (although I could as yet but ill afford the cost) to build a tomb in Norwood Cemetery, where her children could from time to time take flowers to her.

On the evening following my mother's death a strange incident was related. The night fireman at the theatre, whose name was Hotine, had been strongly recommended to us for his post by Captain (now Sir Eyre M.) Shaw. He knew that my mother was ill, but was not aware of any grave cause for anxiety, and did not

know of her death until he was informed on his arrival at his post on the following night, and heard that Miss Lydia Thompson, to whose kindness I was indebted for replacing me in *Ours* for a time, was going to appear in my place. Hotine went straight upstairs to my wardrobe-mistress and anxiously asked if she knew at what time my mother died. She could not say, as no one had yet heard any particulars. She asked him why he wanted to know, and he related the following curious circumstance : "I said 'Good-night,' as usual, to the young missus, who often says a few kind words before she goes home, and I assured her that all was right and safe ; I went round again when the performance was over to make sure, as I always do, you know, after everybody is gone. It was just one o'clock as I sat down to my work" (the man filled up his time by making shoes and boots for his children) "in the little green-room, with the door leading on to the stage wide open. The clock struck *two*, and then *three*, when a loud crash, just as if a portion of the roof had fallen in, made me jump to my feet ; I thought that at least the sunlight chandelier in the ceiling had fallen into the stalls, so I took up my lantern, and went quickly on to the stage to see what had happened. I found everything was just as I had left it. I went all round the theatre, but there was not a thing disturbed." Hotine seemed scared and frightened, and begged to know the hour of my mother's death. When Mr. Bancroft arrived at the theatre he learnt from him the particulars. My mother died at three o'clock on the morning of November 30th.

Letters from Mr. Byron previous to our Dissolution of Partnership.

Byron was nearly always in Liverpool, where he had taken a house, and we rarely met. From the correspondence between him and myself, in which he first suggested that he should retire altogether from the partnership, I will make a few extracts, with a view to place the reader *en rapport* with the position of affairs at this time. These extracts will at least have interest for our many mutual friends.

Mr. Byron's letters are dated from 21, Huskisson Street, Liverpool ; mine from London.

From MR. BYRON to ME, *February 6, 1867.*

"It will be better for us both to cease our joint management at the end of our two years, and I shall willingly dissolve partnership, if you wish it, on the 15th April. I consider that by refusing to play in burlesque you have done me an irreparable wrong, and yourself considerable harm ; however, I have met your views always, and it is no doubt too late for me to repeat what I have so often said, and what is the general opinion of the public.

* * * * *

"I shall be in town to-morrow, or Friday, and will telegraph. There will be no occasion to answer this letter, as I shall see you, in all probability, before return post."

From MR. BYRON to ME (a telegram), *February 7, 1867.*

"I am unfortunately prevented by business here from going to London."

From ME to MR. BYRON, February 7, 1807.

“ I am sorry you are not coming up. Your letter is too long and important to answer easily, and the matters it involves could be so much better settled if we had met at once to talk them over ; as, however, you have postponed your visit, I shall answer your letter candidly.

“ You tell me that ‘ by refusing to play in burlesque ’ I have done you an ‘ irreparable wrong.’ I don’t acknowledge anything of the kind. All my acting in either *Der Freischütz* or *Pandora* would have done very little good for them, beyond saving my substitute’s salary. I can’t help it if my candour wounds you, my dear Byron, but neither of the pieces has been worthy of you—I don’t tell you half what I hear said against them—and both burlesques were very much neglected by you at rehearsal. I feel convinced that *Pandora* only wanted your presence to find out its weak points and want of incident, in order to have made it at least a tolerable success.

“ You have often upbraided me with the sacrifices you have made in writing for only one theatre ; I admit that your literary reputation would naturally suffer, but it has been a very great commercial gain. You have written five burlesques and two comedies, for which you will have received, by April next, a thousand pounds in salary and half of the entire profits. You must also remember that when we started you risked nothing—I risked all. You even made me sign a paper to indemnify you from any share in whatever loss I might suffer ; and for the money I borrowed I have been paying interest, not a penny of which have I claimed from the treasury.

“ You must remember, too, Byron, that when you took

the Liverpool theatres I never murmured, nor even opposed you, although I felt it must prove a fatal blow to my interests ; now tell me frankly if any other partner would have done this ? It is impossible for me not to see that all your energies are now in Liverpool, and if we dissolve partnership at Easter, and I carry on the theatre without you, I don't think my conduct during our two years' business connection will cause you to entertain a single unfriendly feeling towards me.

“ You must know well enough that I have no personal wish to separate from you : indeed, I should be only too glad if we could go on together as we did the first two seasons ; but what a partnership becomes under present circumstances, with you and all your energies centred in Liverpool, I leave you to candidly think about.”

From MR. BYRON to ME, *February 8, 1867.*

“ Much in your letter is very right and very true. Let me, however, correct *one* mistake about the risk. You certainly risked a thousand pounds, and I stipulated that, in case of its loss, *you* would have no claim on *me* ; but in all business transactions at the theatre during our joint management, I have stood precisely the same risk as you. I told you frankly about the *original* risk when you applied to me to join you.

* * * * *

“ Your conduct in the matter of my taking these theatres was truly admirable, and was fully appreciated by me, so much so that you will remember I said at the time I should not consent—on a renewal of our management after two years—to take *half* the profits as my share, considering my frequent absence and divided duty. This I strongly impressed on you at Waterloo, and if we had

remained in partnership, I should have insisted on your receiving the lion's share of the reward. Had my name been associated on the bills, etc., with the management, it would have been different; but as it has always been my aim to award the managerial position to you, as I have never made any engagement or arrangement except at your wish, as you have always superintended the dressing of pieces, they have also been cast as you wished, and as the real management of the theatre has devolved on you, I could not tell how my being a great deal away could materially affect you."

My letter in reply was, in substance, an urgent request to Mr. Byron to "come up to town at once, that some final result should be immediately arrived at."

The result was that our partnership—I rejoice to add, not our friendship—ended on April 15th, two years after its commencement. One further sentence of a letter, in corroboration of a previous statement of mine, will perhaps suffice.

From MR. BYRON to ME, April 10, 1867.

"Our letter of agreement is in my desk in London. It settled you were to receive ten pounds weekly until the end of the second year, thus making the thousand pounds you advanced. This you have done with the exception of one week. If you will draw all the money banked in our joint names out of the bank, after paying yourself the extra ten pounds, you can send me my share of it. I waive all right to half the value of the property in the theatre in consideration of your taking any outstanding debts on your own shoulders.

"Mrs. Byron sends you her kind love. God bless you."

Comedy of “Caste.”

The comedy of *Caste* is specially endeared to me by the dedication.

“To Miss Marie Wilton, Mrs. Bancroft, this comedy is dedicated by her grateful friend and Fellow-Labourer the Author.”

I can well remember during the first run of *Caste* one of the rare occasions on which I was tempted to laugh on the stage in a serious situation. I think when I relate the story I shall be forgiven. Mr. Hare, always a most earnest and conscientious actor, must also plead guilty with me. It happened in the last act; Mr. Younge, who was playing George D’Alroy, had a long wait, and the weather being very hot, he was in the habit of taking off his wig and going into the green-room for a chat until he was called for the stage. On this particular night a member of the company played the unpardonable practical joke of hiding the wig, and left the theatre, forgetting having done so—a mistake deeply regretted afterwards, for this joke was merely intended to cause a temporary confusion. It will be remembered by those who know the play that George D’Alroy is supposed to have been killed in the Indian Mutiny, for which campaign he departs at the end of the second act, where an affecting parting takes place between himself and his young wife. In the last act we are all back at the poor little house in Stangate in mourning, and in deep sorrow for his death. In the scene where Polly Eccles is preparing tea for Captain Hawtree and Sam Gerridge, they are all seated at the table, Polly complaining that the milk-

man is very late. George D'Alroy, who has marvellously escaped death in the mutiny, and has hurried home, arriving in fact before the news of his safety, has seen the milkman outside, and takes the small can from him, brings it in, and comes to the table unseen by any of them, expecting a warm welcome. Polly is in the act of putting the cup to her lips, when she raises her eyes slowly and sees George. She stares at him, thinking he is the ghost of her dead brother-in-law, slowly puts down the cup, keeping her eyes still fixed with terror upon him, and gradually disappears under the table. Sam Gerridge is eating his thick slice of bread-and-butter, quite oblivious of what is going on until he sees Polly go under the table. He looks up with surprise, and, seeking the cause of this strange proceeding, fixes his eyes on George, who is still standing with the milk-can in his hand, and, terrified, follows Polly with a dive under the same table. Captain Hawtree notices this strange conduct, and turns his chair round to ascertain what they have both been staring at. He is equally astonished to see his dead friend come to life, but does not express his amazement in the same fashion, remaining in his chair transfixed. All this is done in silence, not a word being uttered. That is the situation. Well, on the night the wig was missing, every search was made by the dressers, and nowhere could it be found. There was nothing to be done by Mr. Younge but to go on without it. His hat was, of course, made to fit over the wig, and his own hair being cut short, the hat, when on, came so low down that it almost covered his ears, and had somewhat the appearance of an extinguisher. The effect this appearance had upon us can be imagined. On looking up, I saw only a part of his face, hidden under the huge pot-hat, and no ears! It was so sudden and unexpected, that instead of

a look of terror on my face, there was nothing but a convulsive effort to suppress laughter. Mr. Younge muttered under his breath, "For mercy's sake, don't laugh!" I had no sooner disappeared under the table, than I heard Mr. Hare give a kind of grunt, which told me how the strange appearance had affected him, and he and I were under the table exhausted with laughter. Mr. Younge only added to the absurdity of the situation by looking exceedingly angry at such a trick being played upon him: his agitation, serious expression, and, above all, his desperate earnestness in begging us not to laugh, with his head buried in a hat which almost came down to his neck, holding the milk-can out for me to take—a situation which was always a most impressive and interesting one—at this particular moment became to us painfully comic. My efforts to suppress my laughter made me positively ill. When Mr. Hare and I emerged from under the table to see if George D'Alroy were really a ghost or absolute flesh and blood, the moment we faced him we were again convulsed with laughter, for he had removed the extinguisher, and showed his own close-cut dark hair of convict type in place of the flaxen wig. In the business of the scene I had to go off into hysterics when I ascertained for a fact that George was really alive. This was lucky for me, for it helped me to give vent to my laughter. But poor Mr. Hare, whose mouth was full of bread-and-butter, had no such safety-valve, and almost choked. At last we got through the play, and I returned to my dressing-room perfectly exhausted. I believe Mr. Younge never forgave the trick that was played upon him.

“How She Loves Him.”

A comedy named *How She Loves Him*, written by Dion Boucicault, was fixed upon to follow *Caste*, an arrangement which was very welcome to Tom Robertson, as he was on the eve of going to Frankfort to be married to a handsome German girl (Miss Feist), who was his second wife. I doubted the success of Dion Boucicault's play, and he seemed to be aware of it, and wrote me the following letter:—

“326, Regent Street, November 10, 1867.

“MY DEAR MARIE,—

“Shall I tell you what you said when you read the piece? ‘Oh dear! this is not what I expected; I don't see this at all!’

“Now show me how good you think me by saying outright what you think, and don't offend me by ‘doing the nice,’ and by imagining that you can ever wound my vanity.

“The piece you have *is* the old piece cut into three instead of into five acts, with two scenes *added* to bind the first and second acts into one, and the fourth and fifth into one; the second being the old third. There! you see I will not allow you any escape! The comedy is one of ‘character and conversation,’ sketchy and slight. It does not ‘smack’ on your palate, and you are disappointed sadly. There, there! pout it out! Push the glasses away, and say, ‘Give me something else,’ and don't dare to imagine that I shall be the less sincerely yours,

“DION BOUCICAULT.”

Letter from Tom Robertson after seeing the First Revival of
"Ours."

"MY DEAR MARIE,—

"*Ours* was acted so excellently last night that, as I may not see you for the next few days, I write to express the great gratification it gave me to see that the 'light troupe' had distinguished themselves more than ever.

"You know that I am not given to flattery, and that my standard of taste for comedy is somewhat high. I was really *charmed*, and I was very ill the whole night, in discomfort and annoyance. The remark of every one I heard was, 'What wonderfully good acting!' and I was pleased to find Boucicault descanting on it to a chosen few. He said that not only was the general acting of the piece equally admirable, but that he had never—including Paris—seen such refinement and effect combined as in the performance of the second act. He said, too, that the actors who had played in the piece before acted better than ever. I mention this because the same thing struck me. Bancroft was most excellent, and I have never seen him succeed in sinking his own identity so much as in the last act. For the first time in my life I felt grateful to the folks on the stage-side of the foot-lights, and I am not given to that sort of gratitude.

"It was terribly late last night. If the revival should draw, and it should be worth while, could not the first and third acts be relieved of some ten minutes' talk? Cut wherever you like. I shan't wince, for I don't care about either the first or last acts. If they had been

less perfectly acted they would have missed fire, and deservedly.—Yours very sincerely,

“T. W. ROBERTSON.”

No letter in our recollection is more valued by us than this one, which was followed by corroboration from another critical pen:—

“326, Regent Street, W., November 27, 1870.

“MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

“Accept my warmest congratulations on the very great improvement in the present performance of *Ours* over the original cast, especially in the part of Chalcot.

“The tone of the whole is elevated, and I entertain no doubt that the play will have a second run. I agree with the remark of the *Observer* of this morning that the dialogue and business of acts one and three might be accelerated.

“I do not think that they dragged, as it says, but the peculiar dislocation which Tom’s dialogue encourages inclines an actor to slowdom of delivery.

“Excellent when the laughter intervenes, but not so when the dialogue is not so sparkling as to admit of it. I know you will excuse my criticism, and credit me with the sincere interest which induces me to give an opinion.

“Mrs. Bancroft was herself throughout admirable. Give her my love. She looked good enough to eat, every bit. Her dresses were exquisite. Why do they call the ‘Roly-poly’ farce? It is eminently natural.—Yours very sincerely,

“DION BOUGICAULT.”

A Law Suit with Miss Lydia Thompson.

Miss Thompson's engagement ended, unhappily, in a dispute, which had to be settled at Westminster, where the Law Courts then were. Lord Chief Justice Bovill, I remember, presided. Mr. (afterwards Baron) Huddleston fought for my opponent, while our old friend, the late Mr. Serjeant Ballantine, represented our views of the case. The question at issue was of considerable moment to the theatrical world, and during the trial the court was very crowded. While I was giving my evidence I recall quite distinctly the fact of Mr. Bancroft, who occupied a prominent position in the front of the little gallery, enlivening the proceedings by dropping his walking-stick in dangerous proximity to the heads of the junior bar. The case ended in a trivial verdict; inferring, I presume, that plaintiff and defendant were both in the right and both in the wrong. I am afraid I regarded "the law" as a thing "fearfully and wonderfully made," and inclined, very often, to the opinion expressed on the subject by the immortal Mr. Bumble.

On the evening after the trial it so chanced that we met Mr. Huddleston, who was then known as the "buck of the bar," at a party, when our opponent of the previous day had to take me in to dinner, and I had the great pleasure to commence a friendship which my husband and I enjoyed until his lamented death.

An Anecdote of Charles Kean.

For the following anecdote of Charles Kean we were years ago indebted to an old comrade, and cannot resist the temptation to try and repeat it here. The carpenters of country theatres always dreaded Charles Kean's advent amongst them, for, in his earlier days on the stage, when he rehearsed, he would steadily go through his own scenes, word for word (although he must have acted the parts hundreds of times), slowly and deliberately dwelling upon each sentence, just as he would at night. During the whole of this time silence was strictly ordered to be observed all over the theatre; a creaking boot, a cough, a sneeze, the knocking of a hammer, would destroy the illusion, and distress the tragedian beyond measure. It was on pain of dismissal if any carpenter or other servant caused the smallest interruption during Mr. Kean's scenes. This naturally made the working men angry, as the scenic preparation for the tragedies was extremely heavy, and in those days there was always a change of programme every evening.

These delays and cessations of work caused much ill-humour amongst the men, for when they really ought to have been having their dinners, they were compelled to work, or the scenes would never have been ready by night. Directly it became known by the carpenters that "Kean was coming," there would be shrugging of shoulders, groans, and various expressions of discontent. At the commencement of one particular engagement these men formed a conspiracy amongst themselves.

The opening play was *Hamlet*, and they conceived a plan by which the royal Dane might be induced to "cut short" his long soliloquies, and so give them a chance of proceeding with their duties and dining at their usual hour, instead of being compelled to sit or stand looking at one another, not daring to move. The plot was this: One particular man was to place himself somewhere at the back of the gallery (reaching a loft under the roof, in fact, through a trap-door), being quite hidden from sight. It was settled that just as Kean began his great soliloquy this man should call out in a muffled voice to an imaginary fellow-workman. This was the result:

KEAN (after walking up and down the stage and then sitting down reflectively, in slow, measured tones): "To be—or *not*—to be" (long pause)—"that is the question."

VOICE (far-off in front of house, calling): "Jo Attwood!"

KEAN (stopping and looking in the direction, then commencing again after same business): "To be—or *not*—to—be—that is the question."

VOICE (nearer): "Jo Attwood!"

KEAN (after waiting and looking about): "To be or not to—be—that is the question."

VOICE (farther off): "Jo Attwood!"

KEAN (bewildered and annoyed, and in measured tones): "Will somebody find Mr. Attwood?" (A pause)—"To be, or not to be—that is the question."

VOICE (louder): "Jo Attwood!"

KEAN: "Until Mr. Attwood is found I cannot go on!"

"Mr. Attwood" could *not* be found, and the voice, which no one recognized, so well disguised was it, did not cease interrupting Kean, who, at last, gave up his attempt to rehearse and went home; upon which all the carpenters met in their work-room, shut the door, and, in

shoeless feet, silently went through a sort of triumphant war-dance.

Kean shared with England's greatest actor, David Garrick, an inordinate love of praise, even from his humblest worshippers. During his brilliant management of the Princess's Theatre, one of the ballet-girls, who sometimes was given a few lines to speak, and who knew her manager's failing, used to haunt the wings and go into audible raptures over the tragedian's acting. He was playing with great success a pathetic part, and tears flowed down the cheeks of the cunning girl, who eventually attracted personal notice from the actor. Soon she found herself promoted to a superior position. Her advancement, of course, was noticed by her companions, and to her greatest friend among them she told her secret, advising the girl to follow her example. Nothing loth, number two appeared at the wings, and almost howled with grief through Kean's chief scenes, when, to her amazement, he strode angrily by her, then, pointing her out, exclaimed, "Who is that idiot?" She did not improve her position, for, since the advice of her knowing friend, the bill had been changed, and her manager was appearing in one of his most successful *comic* parts.

Among Charles Kean's most popular productions was that unique specimen of the supernatural drama, the *Corsican Brothers*. In the first act, Fabian dei Franchi addresses a letter to his brother as the vision appears to him. In our collection of autographs is one of these letters, written on the stage of the Princess's, which was given to us by Mr. Hastings, who was then the prompter of the theatre. It is a proof how deeply Kean was engrossed in the mock business of the scene, for it runs as follows: "My brother—my dearest Louis—if this finds you still alive, write instantly—though but two words—

to reassure me. I have received a terrible admonition. Write—write.—C. K. 1st August, 1859."

Charles Kean was a wonderful instance of the effect of resolute courage; for years he was laughed at and ridiculed by a large section of the press, and treated with absolute and unworthy cruelty by the withering pen of Douglas Jerrold. Through indomitable pluck he outlived it all, and heard himself spoken publicly of when he was the guest of the shining lights of the land as having "made the theatre into a gigantic instrument of education for the instruction of the young, and edification, as well as instruction, of those of maturer years." We hope that the ground sown with good seed by great actors of the past has not been neglected by their successors.

Paul Bedford.

The new generation will know little of Paul Bedford, but older play-goers will recall his enormous body surmounted by a face very like that of a kitchen clock, and his perpetual "I believe you, my boy!" In a little amateur manuscript magazine, the work of mutual friends for my amusement, and which we laugh at now sometimes, the contributors happily numbering H. J. Byron, are some remarks he wrote about Paul Bedford, among other comic "Answers to (imaginary) Correspondents."

"We beg to state that we never give any information about actors; but as you say you have taken us in ever since we came out, we will, for once in a way, gratify your curiosity by giving a concise history of Paul Bedford. His father was an undertaker in a large way, and his

mother was, of course, a *pall-bearer*. In early life he mixed much with mutes, and later on he mixed a good deal with liquids. He was so very sheepish when young that his parents thought of bringing him up to the “*baa*,” but he always preferred the stage to the *pen*. He was very young as a child, but as he advanced in years he grew older. He grew so exceedingly fat, that his figure had been frequently known to fill the house. He had one severe illness, when he got up thin, but eventually came down plump. He has lost four double teeth, and is marked with a door-key in the small of his back—not that at first sight it is very easy to determine where the small is. He parts his hair from ear to ear, and takes his annual cold in the head every twelfth of October. He has several children, who take after their parent; but as the parent generally finishes his glass, it is needless to state that they take very little after him. He is partial to dumb animals, and keeps two hedgehogs and a highly-trained tortoise in his hind pocket. He is of a mechanical turn of mind, and once invented a machine for extracting the winkle from its tortuous shell. He offered it for four thousand pounds to Government, who, however, preferred a pin, and rejected the invention. He may be seen between the hours of seven and eleven every evening, except Sundays, when he goes out of town to visit an aged grandson. He eats heartily when in spirits, and is seldom empty when in full health. He is particularly partial to broiled fish, and generally eats a *Paul Herring* for breakfast. He takes snuff, and sneezes twice regularly every birthday. He will be fourteen next April, if not thrown back by illness. *Paulo post future, Verb. sap.*
Jam satis. Whack row de row; such is life.

Although the following letter refers to a domestic

matter, it is so very characteristic of the writer, and our old friend, that I do not hesitate to give it the short space it will take up.

5, Conduit Street, November 2, 1868.

“MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

“Accept our united congratulations. May the infant grow as clever as its mamma, and as tall as its papa, and as good as both!—With all good wishes, believe me, my dear Bancroft, yours very sincerely,

“S. B. Bancroft, Esq.”

“H. J. BYRON.”

During the run of *Don Giovanni*, I received the following amusing note from Mr. Buckstone, who came to see our performance:—

“You young scamp! you young *Don Giovanni*! Don’t forget your old *Don Giovanni*. Box for Saturday next, 3rd March. Ever,

“BALVIDINI JUAN BUCKSTONE.”

A Characteristic Letter from the Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, just as he was about to start for Geneva on the “Alabama” Mission.

“40, Hertford Street, Mayfair, Tuesday.

“DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—

“I should be delighted to dine with you as you so kindly wish; but, alas! I am just leaving for Geneva. Your note makes me wish the *Alabama* had gone to the bottom of the sea the day she was launched! In utmost haste, very truly yours,

“A. E. COCKBURN.”

I recall an evening when the Lord Chief dined with us, the late Mr. Critchett being among our guests, who, before we went down to dinner, asked to be introduced to Sir Alexander. I did so in these words: "Will you allow me, dear Chief, to present you to Mr. Critchett, the celebrated oculist? As Justice is blind, you may find him a most useful man." To which Sir Alexander replied in his genial and courtly manner, "If, when you first lift the film from my eyes, you will permit me to gaze on Mrs. Bancroft, I shall thank you, sir!"

From Charles Dickens. One of the last Letters he ever wrote.

"Gad's Hill Place, Higham by Rochester, Kent,
"Thursday, May 31, 1870.

"**MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—**

"I am most heartily obliged to you for your kind note, which I received here only last night, having come here from town circuitously to get a little change of air on the road. My sense of your interest cannot be better proved than my trying the remedy you recommend, and that I will do immediately. As I shall be in town on Thursday, my troubling you to order it would be quite unjustifiable.

"I will use your name in applying for it, and will report the result after a fair trial. Whether this remedy succeeds or fails as to the neuralgia, I shall always consider myself under an obligation to it, for having indirectly procured me the great pleasure of receiving a communication from you; for I hope I may lay claim to being one of the most earnest and delighted of your many artistic admirers—Believe me, faithfully yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

A Riverside Story.

X The following story I recently turned into a play in two acts:—

When we who live and work in smoky London, with its thick slate-pencil sky frowning, as it were, upon our busy, restless life, go into the peaceful country, what a contrast it is! The noiseless, restful country, with its soothing still air as welcome as a down-pillow to a weary head. But even in the midst of this tranquillity, a history now and then of painful and romantic interest can be found. Misfortune is ubiquitous, and knows no “With your leave, or by your leave.” The following episode happened during this holiday. In my country wanderings I often tried to know something of the humbler folk, by going into their houses and talking with them. I soon win my way into their confidences, and they delight to tell me the little histories nearest to their hearts, glad, doubtless, to find a sympathetic listener. Some of their tales are so strangely sad in their simplicity as to make me feel that the tellers were made of finer material than one might suppose, and that the stuff had perhaps been spoiled in the cutting out.

They would relate their stories in such unstudied simple language, that if an artist were by to give them colour, or a poet to embellish them with a cloak of eloquence, how it would spoil them, so touching are they in their honest truthfulness, while at other times they bear such a comic aspect (although the tellers of them are innocent of the fact) that for the life of me I cannot resist a smile, and would give worlds to be allowed to laugh outright;

but one must be cautious, for these poor people are often strangely sensitive.

One morning early I was walking on the beach with one of my married sisters, who passed this holiday with us, when our attention was attracted to a young fellow whom we both knew by going to his mother's cottage now and again and chatting with them there. He was hard at work, seemingly, taking a boat to pieces. As we approached he recognized us, and touched his cap. "Morning, ladies," he said. "You seem very busy," I remarked. "What are you doing?" "Breaking up a boat, mum." I looked closer, and was surprised to see that it was a new boat. "What a pity!" I exclaimed. "It appears quite new." "Yes, mum, it's new." "Badly made—something wrong about it, I suppose?" "No, mum; as good and smart a boat as ever you see." "To whom did it belong?" "To nobody, mum." "What do you mean?" "Well, mum, when I say nobody, I means myself." "Well, you are somebody, surely?" "I don't think I should be reckoned anybody. Nobody thinks much of me, and I don't think much of myself, maybe." "Is that why you are taking the boat to pieces?" "Yes."

I could see a history behind this, for the poor fellow uttered the last sentence with a shade of bitterness in his voice, and his face, which was by nature merry, wore an expression of sadness. We examined some of the pieces, and asked him to explain them to us. He was pleased at our curiosity, especially when my sister asked, "Did you make the boat?" "Yes." "How clever you must be, for is it not a responsible thing to build a boat which is to carry safely so many human beings?" Then I added, with a smile, "If boats could speak, what interesting stories they would tell, and how many lovers' vows might

be repeated!" The young fellow looked hard at me, and said, "Yes; but this one shall tell no love story, for I'm breaking of it up, you see."

I looked farther, and pointing to a fragment on which *Alice* was painted in bright blue letters, I remarked, "Oh! I see, you called the boat *Alice*—a pretty name. I am fond of the name of *Alice*." He fixed his eyes on the name, and yet seemed to be looking far off. After a pause he said dreamily, "Yes; it *is* pretty, and I love it too—leastways, I *did*—and—yes, I love it still." He bit his lips, and I could see a well of tears behind his words. There was a quiet dignity in his voice and manly suffering in his face that made me hesitate to intrude further on what I felt to be some grief.

I broke the brief silence by saying gently, "Forgive me, I am so sorry." I was about to go, when he said quickly, "Don't go, mum. It's strange that you ladies should 'a happened to come to-day like this, just at the time when I was sadder than I've been since a year agone. You've been kind to my old mother, and 'ave give me lots a good advice about my drinkin' 'abits, which ain't so much my fault, if you know'd all about it." He looked round to see that there was no one near enough to interrupt us, and said, "Would you mind listening to me a while, ladies? It's very relievin' to get some one to take a little interest in one now and ag'in. I've nobody but my old mother, and she knows nothing of my troubles, for I've told her nothin' of 'em."

We sat down on the beach, and could see that he had a serious history to tell, for he reflected for a moment, as if to gulp down his emotion. "If I smoke I can talk better. Will you let me smoke? Thankee." He filled his pipe, and, after a few whiffs, went on in his Kentish dialect:

"Little more nor a year ago I was the 'appiest chap

in these parts, for I loved a girl and she loved me. I was twenty-five then, and she was eighteen. She was that pretty, with blue eyes, so bright and true, as if heaven was inside 'em, and they couldn't tell a lie. We was engaged and goin' to be married. I 'ad bought and made from time to time bits of things for furnishin' a cottage a mile or two out yonder, for I'm a bit 'andy in carpenterin' and the like. I was that 'appy, I could 'ardly sleep, mum—she filled my 'ead night and day. All at once a dandyfied young chap come here with a kind of tutor they called a 'coach,' what teaches young fellars to be gentlemen, you know, mum. She didn't know she was so pretty till he told her; he filled her mind with vain notions, and she begun a-lookin' at 'erself all day long in the lookin'-glass, and dressin' of 'erself more gay like. She was leavin' off being the simple lass I loved; she looked to me like a boat a-driftin' away somewhere, and I was losin' sight of her. This fellar was allus a-runnin' after her and givin' her things, so I made up my mind to marry her outright, although I was poor, and it was 'ard to live. All at once, one mornin', quite sudden, they both ran away." His voice failed him here, and after pausing for a second or two he added, "A lump comes into my throat now and ag'in, mum. I 'eerd no more ef 'er, for I never moved a step to follar her. I was sick in my 'eart, and it seemed chilled loik; but my old mother had to be seen to and took care of, so I up and set to work, without telling the mother anything except that my girl 'ad gone to a place in London. Well, things was prosperous with me, and every stroke of work I did brought in money, and in a few months' time I was on the road to putting by tidy sums, and soon I had as much as a hundred pounds in the bank, for I allus had a mind for savin'. Two months ago I 'eerd that the fellar 'ad

deserted my poor girl, and she and her baby-choild was starvin.' So I took the little cottage we was to 'ave if she 'ad been true to me ; I puts in the bits of furniture wot I'd got together, and a little more to make it comfortable. I've never spoken to 'er, and I never will, I take my oath ; but so long as I live she shall never want. She has stopped me from being the good man I wanted to be, and we can't now never come together no more ; but I can't put on one side the remembrance of what she might 'ave been to me. That boat I built for 'er and me, and christened it after her, *Alice*. I painted the name in blue, because it was the colour of her eyes, and, in a drinkin' fit last night, I began a-breakin' of it up, as she 'as broken up my life."

He was quite overcome, and, with his arm raised to his eyes, cried like a child. After a pause, he said, "And this is why I drink a bit at times, ladies ; it's a bad habit, and I'll try to follow your good advice and give it up. I can but try ; but, after all, it 'ardly matters!"

The Macaw in "Tame Cats."

While considering how best to make the scene of the first act, the garden of a pretty villa on the Thames, as effective and natural as possible, it occurred to us that a macaw with his gay plumage would be a beautiful bit of colour on the well-kept lawn. We purchased one of the handsomest birds I ever saw, and had a large stand made for him, which the bird seemed to appreciate immensely, especially when its bright tin dishes were well filled. A chain was attached to one of its legs ; a degradation to which he took kindly, as, probably, the arrangement was

not new to him. When “Mac” was placed one morning on the stage and introduced to the company, he lost no time in making it understood that he preferred them at a distance. No “Scratch a poll,” or “Pretty dear,” or “Kiss me,” seemed to impress the bird. Mr. Bancroft addressed him as “Well, old man,” a familiarity which he resented by shrieks and by performing a kind of war-dance on his perch. The fact of being spoken to by a manager did not impress Mr. Macaw with respect in the least. As time went on, the bird grew more accustomed to his new home, but would permit no one but me to go near him; in fact, his preference became somewhat of a nuisance, for the moment I left the room where he was kept, he made hideous noises until I returned, and then became languid with affection. I had complete power over him, and when the sound of my voice announced my arrival every morning, he grew quite unmanageable until I went to soothe him. I was not sorry that he took this fancy to me, and arranged in the business of the scene to play with him, which, had he acted his part properly, would have been effective enough. He rehearsed admirably, and appeared quite reconciled to his position. At last the eventful night came; the scene was set, the overture was over, and the bell rang for the curtain to rise on a charming little scene, with “Mac,” in all his glory of colour, perched on his stand. But no sooner was the curtain up, than the crowded house, the glare of gas, and the applause, so alarmed the bird that, with his huge wings spread out, he sprang to the ground and waddled round and round the stage with deafening shrieks, dragging his stand (which made as much noise as a hansom cab) after him. The more the audience laughed, the louder the bird screamed. When at last he found his way to the wings, no one dared touch him but me; so,

in the midst of the confusion, I took hold of "Mac," and got him out of the way as quickly as possible. This was Mr. Macaw's first and last appearance, and when he left the theatre the next day, the dressers, carpenters, and other servants hailed his departure in not the politest language. He had, I believe, fastened his beak in their garments more than once.

I presented "Mac" to the Zoological Gardens, where, I believe, he is still to be seen: reflecting, doubtless, on his brief engagement at the Prince of Wales' Theatre.

It was in this play that Charles Collette, my brother-in-law, made his first appearance as a professional actor. He had for some time been the life and soul of his old regiment (3rd Dragoon Guards), *en amateur*, and his brother officers rallied round him, naturally enough, on the occasion of this new departure. The first words spoken by him were accidentally apropos enough, "There's nobody about; I wonder what they're saying of me at the War Office?" To the amazement of the rest of the audience, the friendly dragoons received this simple speech as the finest joke ever penned.

The Ice in the Soup.

A story of his old soldiering-days, which Collette told us years ago, may be allowed a place here. A young fellow had been raised from the ranks and given a commission in another regiment. Before joining, according to custom, he was invited to a farewell dinner by the officers of his old regiment, being placed, as the guest of the evening, on the colonel's right, and helped to all the

dishes first. He was a fine young fellow, but little used as yet to the ways of the polite world and the manners of other dinner-tables than the humble sergeants' mess of those days. The colonel, one of the truest type of gentlemen, did his best to put his young friend as much as possible at ease. The soup was served, and then came a servant to the guest's side, holding a large bowl which contained simply lumps of ice. The weather was hot, for this happened in India, and cold drinks were greatly in request. The young fellow stared at the bowl. The servant asked, "Ice, sir?" The colonel chatted merrily to him on his left; others of the officers began to see the dilemma. "Ice, sir?" again said the mess-waiter. The young, new-made officer, in ignorant desperation, took some of the ice and put it in his soup. A smile began to play on the faces of one or two of the younger officers, when the bowl was offered to the colonel, who went on talking to his guest, and now, without ceasing or moving a muscle, *also dropped a piece of ice into his soup-plate.* Those next either took their cue from him or let the bowl pass, and the young fellow breathed a sigh of relief in the thought that he had done the right thing. If ever soldier deserved the Victoria Cross, the colonel of that regiment did.

Experiences of Cabmen.

It may be a good opportunity to follow up these anecdotes by saying that during my early management of the Prince of Wales' Theatre, and when it had but recently been so christened, I got into a hansom one evening, and hurriedly directed the cabman to drive to "The Prince of Wales'." My thoughts at the time were much

occupied in the early production of our first comedy; I was in a nervous state, anxious and worried, hardly noticing the route my cabman took, when suddenly he stopped. I then asked him in an impatient manner why he did so. " Didn't you want to be drove to the Prince of Wales'?" I answered " Yes." " Well," he said, " here you are." The man had pulled up at Marlborough House !

While on the subject of cabmen I think I may tell another incident which happened on a terribly wet night, and when I had been detained at the theatre somewhat late. I ordered a four-wheeled cab, and directed the driver to my home. We had no sooner started than I found that the poor horse could scarcely crawl. The cab was a wretched broken-down thing, and I should not have been surprised if the bottom had come away, leaving me to run with the rest of it, for the man was deaf, and shouts would have been unavailing. The horse was rickety too, but showed a desire to do his best, poor creature, for he worked his legs in an odd way, as if they were being pulled by strings, hoping he was making some progress, but he was not. The man, who was much older than the cab and horse combined, was not only deaf, but surely blind, for he took me down strange, narrow, dirty-looking streets and the veriest roundabout way, which made me fear that I should never get home. He did nothing but tug, tug, tug at the veteran horse's toothless mouth, which had no effect, except to send him off into jumping action again. I began to feel very anxious, so I opened one of the windows and called out, " Man, man !" He took no notice. Then I tried a push with my umbrella. He mumbled something, and went on into another dark, dismal street, of which I had no remembrance. I could not imagine where he was going to

take me. Again I opened the window. "Man, man!" No answer. I was obliged to have recourse to my umbrella once more. He growled out, "Yes, yes; all right." I was becoming more and more alarmed. At last I positively hung out of the window, and gave the antique cabman a tremendous push with my umbrella, which nearly sent him sprawling over the horse, shouting at the same time, "Man, man! Where *are* you driving to? You are going the wrong way, I tell you." He stopped his old breakdown rattling cab, threw down the reins, turned round on the box-seat and said, "Look 'ere, miss, I'll get inside and you jump on the box, for you're a-worritin' me to death." I said no more; but when I did reach home I thanked my stars!

One day I hired a hansom to go to South Lambeth. The man drove so quickly that I dared not move; the speed almost took my breath away. We tore along to the amazement and alarm of every one we passed. When we approached Vauxhall Bridge the astonished toll-man came hurriedly to the gate for his money; but away flew the cab, soon leaving the bewildered man far behind, and cheating the company of their due. I began to be resigned to the fact that the horse, man, cab, and myself would very soon be smashed. The driver was tipsy, and the whole situation was sufficiently alarming. Presently we neared my destination, and the cabman seemed likely to leave that behind as he did everything else—a very John Gilpin of a Jehu! I hastily pushed my hand through the little trap-door at the top, and cried, "*Stop, stop!*" upon which he, to my horror, took hold of my hand, shook it, and said, "*Thank you, miss, I'm better than I was!*" In spite of my terror I could not resist laughing; but my thankfulness when I found myself not only safe, but sound, was indescribable!

An Anecdote of Keeley.

There is an old theatrical anecdote of Keeley, which is well worth repeating. The name of a firm which, as fruiterers, supplied the household was Berry and Son. On one occasion the junior Berry wrongly sent some account to the actor, who answered the application for the money in this doggerel:

“I say, here’s a small mull-Berry.
Why send in this wrong bill-Berry,
Which is not from me due-Berry?
Your father, the elder-Berry,
Would not be such a goose-Berry;
But you must not look black-Berry,
For I don’t care a straw-Berry!”

“December 22, 1864.

“DEAR BANCROFT,—

“I have been, and am still, very ill indeed, and confined to my bed; but I hastily scratch a few lines to thank you very much for the budget of news, which, I assure you, alleviated the horrors of a particularly bad day. I cannot now attempt to reply beyond briefly reciprocating the good wishes usual at this ‘festive season.’ I hope I *may* have a ‘happy new year,’ but a ‘merry Christmas’ I cannot expect, for I fear I shall pass *the* day, as I have for the last four years, in bed! I sincerely hope you will enjoy yourself, as all good fellows should.

“I return the photograph of the faded comedian with the rheumatic autograph attached. I have passed the blotting-paper over the signature that the calligraphy may

be as faint as the ‘counterfeit presentment’ itself; too prophetic a significance of the fame and memory of him who now subscribes himself,—Very faithfully yours,

“LEIGH MURRAY.”

A letter from a dear friend since, alas! dead, whose society, for very many years, was a charm to all privileged to enjoy it:—

“32, Weymouth Street, Portland Place,
“January 2, 1874.

“MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—

“It was very like you sending me that pretty little New Year’s note.

“I thought I should like to give myself a treat in 1874, and so went to see you. ‘Time has not touched your infinite variety;’ I laughed and cried as I have done before.

“Your note will be placed in my book of letters. I think you shall be put between Dr. Parr and Lord Brougham—no, Naomi Tighe shall be next Lord Byron and Shelley; Jack next, mind. My regards to Mr. Bancroft.—Yours,

“ANNE B. PROCTER.”

The high authority of the accomplished President of the Royal Academy will excuse us printing the following kind note on the subject of “School”:—

“Holland Park Road.

“DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—

“A line to say that I think your theatre quite the dandiest thing I ever saw. I should have gone round to tell you so after the play, but that I had a complete extinction of voice, and could therefore not have made myself audible.

“How well it went off last night, and how dead tired of it *you* must be! not so *we*.

“Believe me, with kind remembrance to Bancroft, yours very truly,

“FRED LEIGHTON.”

“Edinburgh, November 27, 1869.

“MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—

“You will never guess what I am going to ask you, and still less why I ask it.

“Will you and the principal members of your company come and play me a scene from a short act at Covent Garden on Tuesday morning, January 4th? ‘Good gracious!’ you exclaim, ‘what on earth for?’ Because it is my farewell benefit, previous to my leaving for Australia! I sail for Melbourne on the 31st of January. If after this you can resist, if you do not with tears in your eyes falter out, ‘I consent,’ you are made of sterner stuff than I give you credit for. Give my kind regards to Bancroft, and ask him to join in the good work. Say what you will play, and rely on it that the ‘approbation of our kind friends before us’ will be certain.

“A line to 25, Pelham Crescent will reach me; and, in the meantime, I will meditate on the most gracious form in which I can express my thanks.

“Faithfully yours,

“C. J. MATHEWS.”

The performance, which was in many ways memorable, took place on Tuesday morning, January 4th, at Covent Garden Theatre, before a most brilliant audience—all the leading actors of the day appearing in various selections.

The principal members of our own company played the examination scene from *School*, in which I, as Naomi Tighe, could not resist improvising an extra question to be put to me by Dr. Sutcliffe as to “what she considered the most valuable possession of Australia?” The answer, “Charles Mathews,” was, of course, a good one for the occasion, and appealed at once to the sympathies of the audience.

A few nights afterwards a complimentary and brilliantly attended banquet was given at Willis’s Rooms to Charles Mathews, at which he presided himself, and, as chairman, proposed his own health, in a most amusing speech, delivered in his inimitable way :

“The most important task assigned to me has now to be fulfilled, and I rise to propose what is called the toast of the evening with a singular mixture of pleasure and trepidation. I was going to say that I was placed in not only a novel but an unprecedented position, by being asked to occupy the chair to-day. But it is not so. There is nothing new in saying that there is nothing new; and I find in the *Times* newspaper of October 3rd, 1798, an advertisement of a dinner given to Mr. Fox at the Shakespeare Tavern, Covent Garden, on the anniversary of his first election for Westminster, ‘The Hon. Charles James Fox in the chair.’ Here is a great precedent; and what was done in 1798 by Charles James Fox is only imitated in 1870 by Charles James Mathews. I venture to assert, and I think I may do so without vanity, that a fitter man than myself to propose the health of our guest could not be found; for I venture also emphatically to affirm that there is no man so well acquainted with the merits and demerits of that gifted individual as I am. I have been on the most intimate terms with him from his earliest youth. I have watched

over and assisted his progress from childhood upwards, have shared in all his joys and griefs, and I assert boldly, and am proud to have this opportunity of publicly declaring, that there is not a man on earth for whom I entertain so sincere a regard and affection. Indeed, I don't think I go too far in stating that he has an equal affection for me. He has come to me for advice over and over again, under the most embarrassing circumstances, and, what is still more remarkable, he has always taken my advice in preference to that of any one else."

Death of Tom Robertson.

On Wednesday, the 1st of February, 1871, poor Tom Robertson's fatal illness was drawing to a close. We were fortunate enough to call upon him at a good moment, and he begged to see us. We found him propped up in a big chair, breathing with difficulty. He talked for some little time, dwelling, among other subjects, on the new play he had conceived for us, adding that only earlier in the day he had jotted down some more notes about it. All this we knew could not be, and when we went away we both felt we should never touch his hand again. [During Tom Robertson's absence at Frankfort, when he left England to be married, I had a strange dream about him which I related to a mutual friend, who imprudently repeated it to Tom some time afterwards. My dream was this: I saw them being married, and when he was placing the ring upon his bride's finger, I could see that it was lined with black; then I thought, when he left the church, two children came up to Mrs. Robertson with wreaths of *immortelles*

in their hands. I quite forgot all about this dream as time went on ; but poor Tom, it seemed, did not. On this day, when we were leaving him, and we saw too plainly that the sad end was near, he drew me towards him, and said quietly, “ Do you remember your dream about me, Marie ? The ring is getting black, and the wreaths of *immortelles* are made.”] On the night of the Friday following, when the play was over, Dion Boucicault was waiting privately at the theatre to gently break the news to us that suddenly, though quietly, the end had come that evening.

Never were the oft-quoted words, “ What shadows we are ! what shadows we pursue ! ” more fully realized.

After an early manhood passed in struggling misery, and sometimes almost want, Robertson was snatched from life when he had only just begun to taste its sweets. His footprints, as it were, upon the shore of fame were quickly placed, but he trod deep enough for even the sands of Time not readily to efface them.

No one had fewer enemies or more friends than he. Tom Robertson was fond of comparing our conduct with that of other managers towards him in his early days, and would often linger long after the rehearsals were over, giving us painful accounts of his many struggles in life, when, at times, he would express himself with much bitterness. We became the best of friends ; our opinions on the art of acting perfectly coincided with his, and the result was, to quote the words of others, “ A new era in dramatic history.”

Some peculiarities, referring especially to his stage life, of so successful and distinguished a writer as Robertson proved to be, may be worth recording. He always sat in the same box on all first nights of his comedies at the Prince of Wales’s Theatre, and during their progress

rarely looked at the stage, but watched the audience, glancing continually and rapidly from one part of the theatre to another, to gather the different effects the same point or speech might produce on various people, being of course familiar from rehearsal with the actors' treatment; while, between the acts, he would often push his way into parts of the theatre where he would not be recognized, and listen to all the opinions he could overhear. He also made a point of having some one—entirely removed from theatrical life—in each part of the theatre, whom he would see on the following day and hold long conversations with, carefully comparing the impression and the remarks he drew from these different witnesses, generally, he said, with valuable results.

Tom Robertson was most sensitive, and at the same time terribly sarcastic. His early troubles, I fancy, soured his nature, and often blunted his best impulses. He loved to dwell upon his sorrows to a sympathetic listener, and would relate his wretched experiences with such bitterness that it often made me feel sorry that he would not take a less jaundiced view of the world, which he said he should like to have "as a ball at his feet, that he might kick it."

He was very unforgiving and relentless in his condemnation when he thought he had been slighted or wronged, although he was tender-hearted and very charitable, especially in feeding the hungry, ever ready to sympathize with those who were sick or in trouble of any sort. He would take a strange delight in saying the most biting, cutting things to certain of his acquaintances, but would immediately resent any sarcasm if pointed to himself. I have known him writhe under adverse criticism, and fret over it until he became absolutely peevish. I shall never forget the terrible night of the production at the Adelphi

of a drama written by him called *The Nightingale*. I was in delicate health at the time, and not acting: Mr. and Mrs. Robertson persuaded me to accompany them to the theatre, and we occupied a stage-box. During the performance Tom came in and went out in a restless and nervous state of excitement painful to witness. Not long after the play began, it was evident to me, and also to Mrs. Robertson, that its success was doubtful; but we dared not even hint our fears to Tom, who seemed to be in a sort of dream, expecting loud applause at certain moments, which, however, did not come, and the fact seemed to daze him; he appeared unable to realize that the play was in jeopardy, but the awful pallor of his face told us of his intense and anxious suffering. Failure was imminent, and ominous sounds were heard all over the theatre. Suddenly he would rush in and hurriedly ask, "How do you think it is going?" with such a scared look that we feared to tell him. I dreaded the end of the play, for its fate was sealed, and wished from my heart that I had not yielded to their persuasions to accompany them. As the last act proceeded, and laughter came where he intended to produce sympathy, and various other signs of ridicule so well known to "first-nighters" were forced upon him, he grew ashy-pale and very silent. When the curtain finally fell, amidst a shower of groans and hisses, he quietly prepared to leave the theatre; but as he left the box, he shook his fist at the audience and muttered between his clenched teeth an imprecation which he did not intend either of us to hear. Oddly enough, although the piece was a deserved failure, Tom never would (at least to his friends) admit that it was not a good play; and he told me himself that he should never forgive the audience of that night. I, indeed, ought to say so, for I was seriously ill afterwards.

Robertson's personal appearance never seemed to enter much into his thoughts ; I don't think the idea of being tidy or untidy occurred to him, for he was a Bohemian to the heart's core. I never saw him act, but I think it is well known, and the admission was frankly made by himself, that he was not "esteemed a good actor." He and I never once during the whole of our friendship knew what it was to have an angry word. This will always be a happy reflection to me, and I mark the days when we first met with red letters ; we were of mutual value to each other, and certainly our good stars were in the ascendant when Tom and I were "first acquaint."

A Letter from Mr. Ruskin after seeing "Ours."

"Denmark Hill, S.E., March 16, 1871.

"**MY DEAR MR. BANCROFT,**—

"I cannot refuse myself the indulgence of thanking you for the great pleasure we had at the play *Ours* on Wednesday last. As regards myself, it is a duty no less than an indulgence to do so, for I get more help in my own work from a good play than from any other kind of thoughtful rest.

"It would not indeed have been of much use to see this one while Mrs. Bancroft could not take part in it ; but much as I enjoy her acting and yours, I wish the piece, with its general popular interest, did not depend so entirely on you two, and, when you two are resting, on the twins. I was disappointed with Mr. Hare's part ; not with his doing of it, but with his having so little to do. However, that was partly my own mistake, for I had a fixed impression on my mind that he was to wear

a lovely costume of blue and silver, with ostrich feathers, and, when he was refused, to order all the company to be knouted, and send the heroine to Siberia.

“In spite of his failure in not coming up to my expectations, will you please give him my kind regards? and believe me—Yours very gratefully,

“J. RUSKIN.”

Amusements at Home.

Owing to the reign of the Commune and the siege of Paris, the entire company of the *Théâtre Français* first came over to England and acted from May 1st until July 8th at the Opera Comique Theatre, in the Strand. At nearly all the *matinées* which were given on Saturdays we were present. At one of these morning performances, when we were accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Hare, I especially recall the exquisite acting of Favart and Delaunay in *La Nuit d'Octobre*, which greatly impressed us all. For some time we would revert to that performance as being one of the most delicate and artistic we had ever witnessed on the stage. I have a very happy recollection of a particular evening we spent with Mr. and Mrs. Hare, who were living at that time a short distance only from our house; and it happened that when we or they were not engaged elsewhere on Sunday evenings, we often dined with them, or they with us. On those occasions, Mr. Hare and I would often think of something in the shape of entertainment (as if we had not enough of it during the week!) for the amusement of our tiny audience, which consisted of Mrs. Hare and Mr. Bancroft only. On one

evening we gave an imitation of Favart and Delaunay. It was declared so good that one felt inclined to give it to the public, but perhaps preparation would have spoiled it.

“Mais où est Pierson ?”

Mr. Bancroft related this amusing story. A little incident that happened at the Théâtre du Vaudeville on one of my visits, soon after the production of *Diplomacy*, and was amusing enough at the time. A Parisian couple came into the stalls directly the first act had ended, and sat immediately in front of me. By their chatter, it was soon evident that Mademoiselle Pierson, who played Odette, was the great object of their visit and the idol of the lady; the curtain having just fallen upon the favourite actress's great opening scene, and, counting two long French *entr'actes*, full an hour and a half had to elapse before she appeared again. When the second act was about a third over, the lady, who evidently knew nothing of the play, said to her companion, “Mais où est Pierson ?” Then, at each fresh entrance of a female character, she said, “Ah, la voilà !” when up went her opera-glass, to be followed by a regretful, “Non, ce n'est pas Pierson.” Further and further proceeded the play, which was constantly interrupted by the plaintive question, “Mais, donc, où est Pierson ?” and the querulous reply, “Tais-toi, my chère.” At the end of Act II., the lady plainly began to think herself cruelly swindled, and, till the curtain rose again, little more was heard from her than “Où est Pierson ?” The third act commenced with a long scene between men; the little lady grew more and more exasperated, when at last, to her evident relief,

quite a crowd of women in evening toilettes entered on the scene. With a sigh of forgiveness she again seized her opera-glass, eagerly scanning the features of each one of them in turn, only to find the object of her adoration still was absent. No words can paint the expression of mingled disgust and anguish she then threw into her inquiry, “*Mais, mon Dieu, mon ami, où donc est Pierson?*” When, at length, the charming actress, exquisitely dressed, really entered, and her long-suffering companion whispered triumphantly, “*La voilà, c'est elle ; c'est Pierson !*” the poor little woman answered, “*Oui, mais allons nous en, il est temps de se coucher maintenant !*”

Some Verses written by Me on the Queen's Seclusion, a few years after the Death of the Prince Consort.

“Reproach her not ! Let no harsh tongue
With cruel counsel seek
To dash the tear from anguish wrung
That lingers on her cheek.

“Reproach her not ! Why lift the veil
Of sorrow from her brow ?
Why crush love's blossoms as they pale
In grief's cold shadow now ?

“Reproach her not, that still she weeps
In sad seclusion's gloom,
Still droops for him who darkly sleeps
Death's slumber in the tomb.

“Reproach her not ! Nor idly deem
The glory of a crown
Should wake her soul from that sweet dream
Of joy for ever flown.

“Reproach her not! But in each breast,
 Be this a people’s prayer:
 God’s grace upon the mourner rest
 And hallow her despair.”

Letters from Lord Lytton on his Comedy of “Money.”

“DEAR SIR,—

“I am obliged for your courteous letter, and have no wish to make frivolous objections to your performance of my comedy. If it suits your convenience to play Act IV. without change of scene between one room and another in Evelyn’s house, so be it; only let me first see how you would modify lines.

“It is not a few verbal cuts here and there on which I should think it worth while to cavil with a management so accomplished and so skilled as yours.—Yours truly,

“LYTTON.”

“12, Grosvenor Square, May 10, 1872.

“DEAR MADAM,—

“Our mutual friend, Mrs. Lehmann, I trust, conveyed to you my high appreciation of the remarkable skill and ability with which the comedy of *Money* has been placed on your stage. But I feel that I ought to thank you, in words not addressed through another, for the gratification afforded me on Saturday last.

“Had the play been written by a stranger to me, I should have enjoyed extremely such excellent acting; an enjoyment necessarily heightened to an author whose conceptions the acting embodied and adorned.—Truly and obliged,

“To Mrs. Bancroft.”

“LYTTON.”

Mr. Hare and the Ostler at Liverpool.

One day during our stay we all arranged to have a country drive, and walked to some livery stables in the neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant to order a carriage. On our arrival we could not find a creature; the yard seemed quite deserted, and we concluded that all the vehicles must be out on hire for some special occasion, for there was not even a gig to be seen anywhere. We rang the ostler's bell, but no one answered the summons, so there we stood, among the empty coach-houses and loose boxes, with silence everywhere around, not knowing what to do. We were on the point of leaving, when Hare remarked that the loose boxes, with their upright bars, half-way from the top, looked very like wild beasts' cages, and, as he said this, went into one of them. He closed the door after him, and immediately proceeded to give an imitation of a caged lion. He walked up and down close to the bars, peering through them exactly like some wild animal in the Zoo, showing his teeth and making hideous noises. The imitation was very funny, and, encouraged by our amusement, Hare continued his performance, prowling, peering, and snarling, quite innocent of the tardy arrival of a great, hulking ostler-fellow, who was standing gaping at him like a country chawbacon, with his eyes and mouth wide open. Suddenly Hare caught sight of the man, and at once tried to make a rapid exit; but the door of the impromptu cage would not open, and there stood the highly-amused yokel, enjoying the fun which had been accidentally provided for him, while poor Hare became more and more furious at being caught, as he afterwards said,

"making a fool of himself to a grinning idiot," without being able to get away. At last the man extricated him, and Hare left the place as quickly as his legs would take him, the ostler looking after him still with an empty grin upon his face, evidently thinking him some harmless lunatic, or the clown from a neighbouring circus. The whole affair was so ludicrous, the situation so extremely comic, that we all laughed until we felt perfectly ill. In fact, as we followed Hare's retreating and indignant figure down the street, we laughed till the people stood and gazed, and must have thought us mad as well.

On August 31st, 1872, it so chanced that our old friend Edmund Yates arrived in Liverpool, bound on his journey for fame and fortune in America. His last hours in England were spent with us, and, of course, we saw him off. We accompanied him on the tug, and went with him on board the Cunard ship *Cuba*, remaining until the last signal to leave for shore was given, and introduced him to a friend of ours, who was going to be a fellow-passenger to New York. This gentleman had a peculiar facial expression, which appeared like a swollen cheek after severe toothache, and which made one eye look as if it were always winking. After a last "Good-bye" we left them; and, as we steamed away, they both stood watching us. Edmund Yates looked so sad and thoughtful, and there was such a solemn look upon his face, as he waved his adieux, that, by way of cheering him at the last moment, it was impossible for me to resist the temptation (while our friend looked another way) of giving a facial imitation of his peculiarity. This had the desired effect on Yates; for he went off into a fit of genuine, hearty laughter, and has often said since that he shall never forget the incident, as it put his thoughts into a happier groove,

and did him good. So our oblivious friend, who was none the worse for it, contributed innocently to this change of feeling.

“What’s there to Larf at in that?”

While my husband was tearing, in a hurried way, over the Continent, I was at peace in my sister’s cottage by the beautiful Thames, and will tell a little story of a homely woman who lived not far from it, and to whom my sister had shown some kindnesses.

One day I looked in at a small sweet-stuff shop she kept, and where I had often been before, but not to eat the acid-drops or bulls’-eyes which graced the tiny window in a single row of greenish glass-bottles, and which had lost their freshness of colour, and stuck together as if to keep one another warm. They looked sickly, pale, and withered up, and very far from being in their first youth; the sun of many summers had faded them, and the chills of many winters had shrivelled them. I made my way to the cramped sitting-room, which served as kitchen, dining-room, and nursery, where I was greeted by several little voices, some laughing, some crying. There was the mistress of the house holding a baby at her breast with one hand, and combing the hair of an older baby with the other, while the rest of the progeny were scattered about the room. One was playing with a doll all bruises and cracks, which looked weary of being tossed and dropped, clad in a scrap of faded red cotton, and its remnant of hair hanging by a thread. One eye had disappeared, and the other had a wild, mad stare, as much as to say, “A little more of

this, and I must shriek!" A boy, to whom a handkerchief would have been a comfort, was seated at the window with a slate which he would scrape with a pencil held in a perpendicular position, making my teeth feel as if I had been eating lemons all day. The poor woman appeared rather unamiable, and I asked her how she was. She replied, "Oh, mum, I'm as well as can be expected, but I'm worried a good deal! You can't drag up a family loik this 'ere without being worried, you know, and I'm worried more than most folks, leastways as I knows on." "I am sorry to hear this," I replied; "a family is always an anxiety, but then there is not one of them that you would like to lose." "Lord forbid, mum, say I! I love 'em all; but I can't 'elp being a bit anxious, and I shows it in my face, I dare say. But my 'usband is the most inconsiderestist man I knows. Last night he comes 'ome at six o'clock for 'is tea. I'd done a hard day's washin', and I was that tired, mum, I could 'ardly 'old up my 'ead. Well, he comes in, sits him down, and begins his tea; then, quite sudden, he looks at me and he says, 'Why, missus, ye're a lively one, I don't think! I comes 'ome tired from work, and wants to see yer 'appy. Why, yer looks as if yer 'ad lost 'arf-a-crown and found a button. Why don't yer larf?' 'Larf!' I says, 'larf! It's all very well for you to talk; while ye're at work in the fields you 'ave yer pals to talk to, and to eat yer bit o' dinner with, and yer 'ave the clear air to enjoy it all in. Here am I stuck at 'ome with six brats wot's a-fightin' and squallin' all day long. *What's there to larf at in that?* I 'ave a babby to nuss, what's that weak as the doctor says I ought to drink porter, and where is it to come from? as I can't sell a single acid-drop, 'cos the parents say they be bad for the teeth, and there the blessed things stick in them bottles

a-starin’ at me till I’m sick o’ the sight o’ ‘em. *What’s there to larf at in that?* There’s Liza in bed with measles, and she ‘as to be watched noight and day, and fed on sulphur to draw it out on the surface, so I don’t get no sleep. *What’s there to larf at in that?* Then there’s Johnny with his ‘ead that bad, wot’s brought on by the school teachers a-crammin’ verscs into it. The doctor says that the lad’ll ‘ave absence on the brain, and wake some morning a stark hidiot. *What’s there to larf at in that?* I looks in the glass, and I can see myself a-getting older and uglier every day. *What’s there to larf at in that? ”*

Mr. Webster’s Last Appearance on the Stage.

It was in the comedy of *Money*, on the occasion of a complimentary benefit given to Mr. Compton during his fatal illness, that Mr. Webster made his last appearance on the stage, as Mr. Graves, his original part. He was eighty years of age and very feeble; we had noticed him to be in a very infirm state at the one rehearsal he attended. When he came to the wing dressed for the performance, I saw plainly how feeble he was. As his cue approached, he suddenly clung to Mr. Bancroft in a terror-stricken way, and said with emotion, “Oh, my dear boy, where am I? I’m very frightened: I don’t remember what I have to do.”

We were greatly pained, and dreaded some catastrophe. Fortunately the once famous old actor, whom it was sad indeed to see so shattered, had but a few words to say. Mr. Bancroft endeavoured to cheer him, and putting his arm round him, said gently, “It’s all right, Mr. Webster;

you remember Mrs. Bancroft, don't you?" "Remember Marie? of course I do." "Then, sir, you've nothing to fear: she will come to you and look after you directly you step upon the stage."

He had to reassure and talk to him in this way as the cue came nearer and nearer. He told him how and when to follow him; the old actor gave him a last sad, wistful look, and then obeyed like a little child. After the applause which welcomed the great comedian of days gone by had died away, he stood as if in a dream; I gently took my place by the old man's side, as my part of Lady Franklin allowed me to do, and helped him through the lines he had to speak.

We never met again.

Letter from Lord Lytton.

We had been in frequent communication with Lord Lytton, and only a very short time before the unexpected close of his life received the following interesting letter from Knebworth:—

"DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—

"Pray excuse the liberty I take in this note. A lady of my acquaintance has a daughter about the age of thirteen, who has conceived a strong predilection for the stage, and seems, from what I hear, to give promise of qualifications likely to achieve success in that profession. I have ventured to advise the lady, before she either thwarts or encourages her daughter's inclinations, to give the child a few lessons in elocution and the rudiments of the actor's art, by some experienced teacher who will

candidly say, after a short trial of the pupil's natural gifts, whether they *do* justify the choice of a profession in which young persons are so apt to suppose that they must have a talent for that which they have only a fancy for.

“Will you kindly inform me if you know of any such teacher, whose frank opinion of the pupil's chance of success as an actress could be fairly relied upon?

“Though a child of thirteen is very young to raise the question as to her future profession, yet I have a strong belief that one who has a real genius for the stage shows it very early; and if this child has not such genius it would be more easy to divert her mind from the idea now than it might be later.

“With repeated apologies for the trouble I give you, for which my only excuse is that I know no one whose opinion and advice on such a subject I would so readily take, believe me, your obliged servant,

“LYTTON.”

A Characteristic Letter from the delightful Comedian, Charles Mathews.

“Nice, January 19, 1873.

“MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

“It is hard to be obliged to come indoors on such a heavenly day to write a letter on business, and you will no doubt think it harder to be obliged to read it. But friendship calls, and I sacrifice myself upon its altar. Do thou likewise.

“A very nice fellow, Captain —, now in the far west of America, has written a comedy. (‘O Lord!’ I hear you say.) It is peculiar and strictly military. Now, all

I ask of you is to read it, have the parts copied out and produce it, playing, of course, the principal part yourself—nothing more. Your new piece, of course, will not run more than two or three years, and then you will have this ready to fall back upon. The human mind naturally looks forward, and managers cannot make their arrangements too soon. If by any unforeseen, though most improbable, chance you may not fancy the piece (such things have happened), please drop me a sweet little note, so charmingly worded that the unhappy author may swallow the gilded pill without difficulty. There is something in the piece, or I would not inflict it upon you. If well dressed, and carefully put upon the stage, it *might* be effective.

“This is what is called writing just *one line*. You will of course say it ‘wants cutting,’ like the piece. So I will cut it—short.—With kind regards, faithfully yours,

“C. J. MATHEWS.

“On reading this rigmarole, I find I have only used the word ‘piece’ four times. When you give my letter to the copyist, you can make the following alterations: For ‘piece’ (No. 1) read ‘play.’ For ‘piece’ (No. 2) read ‘production.’ For ‘piece’ (No. 3) read ‘work.’ For ‘piece’ (No. 4) read ‘comedy.’ ”

The “Royal Box” at the Prince of Wales’s Theatre.

The royal box at the Prince of Wales’s Theatre was made by throwing two boxes into one, and on a certain Friday night news reached the theatre that it was required for the following evening. The official in charge

at the time found that both boxes had been taken—one at the theatre, the other at a librarian's in Bond Street—and that, in fact, nothing remained unlet but a small box on the top tier. Anxious, however, not to disappoint the Prince of Wales, it was decided that every effort should be made in the morning to arrange matters. The box which had been sold at the theatre was kindly given up by the purchaser, and a visit to Bond Street fortunately disclosed the name of the possessor of the other, for it had been let to a regular customer of the librarian, who represented the purchaser as a very agreeable man, who might be induced to either accept the little box on the upper tier, or to go to another theatre instead. The gentleman was a stock-broker, so a messenger was at once sent to his office in the City; when he arrived the man was told by a clerk that his master had just left—Saturday not being a busy day. After a great deal of difficulty, and through representing his errand as of the greatest importance, our invincible messenger succeeded in learning the private address, which was some miles distant, of the possessor of this coveted private box; so away he went, as fast as a hansom would take him, to the suburban residence of the hunted stock-broker, where, on his arrival, the door was opened by a maid-servant. "Is Mr. — at home?" "No, sir." "When will he be?" "Can't say, sir." "Won't he be home to lunch?" "No, sir; master went to Liverpool on business this morning, and won't be back till Monday."

The door of a room leading from the hall was opened at this moment, and a portly lady appeared upon the scene.

"Went to Liverpool!" echoed the messenger. "Nonsense; he's going to the Prince of Wales's Theatre this evening, and I've been sent to see if it's possible to ex-

change the box the gentleman has taken, through some of the royal family coming and wanting it."

The portly lady now approached, and asked if she could be of any service. The messenger repeated his story, and explained his errand. The lady smiled blandly, and said that if the small box on the upper tier was reserved, matters would no doubt be amicably arranged in the evening, if her husband, Mr. —, was going to the theatre, so the man went away rejoicing.

At night, not long before the play began, the gentleman, who had in vain been sought so urgently, arrived in high spirits, accompanied by a very handsome lady ; the attendants were eagerly on the watch for the presentation of his ticket, on which, of course, was the number of the wanted box, and our manager was in readiness to explain the circumstances, and to beg acceptance of the box reserved instead of it. The gentleman fully bore out the character given him for good-nature, and very kindly agreed to put up with the alteration.

There ended our share in the transaction, but hardly were the unfortunate man and his handsome companion left alone than the portly lady from the suburban residence reached the theatre, and asked to be shown to "the private box that had been reserved for Mr. —, in place of the one he had given up that evening by request, as she wished to join the party." The lady was at once conducted there ; the door was opened. Tableau ! What explanation was given as to the business-trip to Liverpool we never knew, or whether the third act of this domestic drama was rehearsed later before Sir James Hannon.

An Experience on Mount St. Bernard.

Our first trip together abroad was a very happy one, and, in the time we were able to spare for it, we saw a great deal, and remembered much. Every church of interest, every gallery of pictures, every collection of art treasures, that our path crossed was hurried through in turn ; while, of course, each waterfall must be looked at, each cave explored—all with a confusing speed that a little experience cures when one begins to learn the value in all ways of repose.

Here is an incident which was a disgrace to humanity. We were followed up Mount St. Bernard by an open carriage which was drawn by two pretty little Arab ponies, and driven by a man (?) who was accompanied by two young girls. The little vehicle and the almost exhausted but willing animals, we afterwards heard, had been bought outright, and were being cruelly driven day after day by this man, his halts being chiefly for his own refreshment only. All who have mounted to the top of the Great St. Bernard will remember the labour of getting there ; even the strong native horses are spared by their humane masters when they are mounting the steep slopes, but this creature knew not the word *spare*, and whipped the tiny Arabs all the way. When we arrived at the canteen, just before the difficult path to the hospice begins, we left our carriage (?) and mounted mules or walked. It will hardly be believed that this merciless owner of a human shape made the worn-out and already half-dead ponies struggle over the rude, rough path, which was fit only for the sure-footed mules. It was a pitiful sight to watch the strained sinews and the look of despair of these poor

beasts; but remonstrances with the inferior animal who drove them were in vain: the reply received was, "They are my horses; I shall do as I please. I don't care if they do die. I've got here now, and I mean to get back to-morrow; then they may die if they like." We refrain from revealing the man's nationality, but are glad to say he was not an Englishman.

Let us turn from this brutal experience and tell how, on our arrival at the hospice, we were most kindly received by a young monk: the climate is too severe for old men to stay there any length of time. We arrived, it so happened, on a fast-day; so our fare was frugal, though ample. Soon after we were safely housed, at the end of a hard journey, two medical students whom we had passed, already looking fagged, on the road, and who had walked all the way from Chamounix, arrived so tired and footsore that one of the young fellows fainted as he reached the door, when the kindness shown to him by the monks was beautiful to see.

We passed a pleasant evening, and found the old visitors' books very interesting, as were some of the gifts to the monastery, especially the little piano presented by the Prince of Wales in remembrance of his visit some years before, which, owing doubtless to the altitude, had sadly lost its tone.

The sleeping accommodation was simple but clean, and we were roused early enough in the morning by the bell for matins. In the sharp, crisp air we had a lovely walk round the lake at the top of the pass, being accompanied by some of the famous dogs. We admired the fine brutes all the more after visiting the Morgue and hearing stories of their rescues of many a poor traveller from a shroud of snow. Before we left, we had a wretched example, much commoner than one could believe, we were

told, of the parsimony of a visitor with regard to the alms-box—the only method of acknowledgment accepted by the poor monks for the hospitality so generously shown to all comers; the owner of the little Arabs took his departure without giving a single coin. He and his daughters had dined, slept, and breakfasted!

A Black Dose.

All who witnessed our production of the *School for Scandal* will remember the black boy, a feature, among others, which was introduced into the comedy for the first time. It may be interesting to know the difficulty we had to find him, for we resolved that our Pompey should be a real one. The docks, workhouses, charitable institutions, and every likely place we could think of, were searched. It was not at all difficult to find a grown-up black, but our page was not to be more than ten years old. Their captains were under contract to take back to their native land those negroes who were on board ships in harbour, and, of course, dared not lend them. We were in despair, for it had been a pet notion of mine, and was to give the finishing-touch to this elaborate picture of the eighteenth century.

Grievously disappointed, I was on the point of giving up all hopes of finding my black boy, when one afternoon a gentleman was announced, who had been shown into the drawing-room accompanied by a true type of Africar beauty, dressed as a tiger. He was a perfect picture; very neat, and well pulled together, with spotless breeches, gloves, and collar, a face with large protruding

lips, bright eyes, receding forehead, woolly hair, and a skin of a dark copper hue, which shone as if it had been polished, and looked like a well-coloured meerschaum pipe. I thought to myself, "Pompey is discovered!"

The stranger introduced himself as an owner of sugar plantations in Africa, adding, that the boy, who was called "Biafra," after the ship he came over in, belonged to him, and having heard of my great desire to find a black page to appear in a play, if I would guarantee to return him to his master when I no longer required his services, he would lend this one to me with pleasure; only, I must undertake to keep him in the house, under my own care; the boy in return might make himself useful by helping to wait at table—but it was imperative that he must remain in our house. I was delighted with the proposal, and just at that moment my husband came in. The case was explained to him, and he readily agreed to the conditions. I noticed that from the moment it was settled the boy should *pro tem.* belong to me, he came and stood close by my side, assuming at once that he was my personal property.

When his master had gone, I took Biafra to the other servants, and explained his presence amongst them. They took kindly to him as a novelty, and I very soon heard ripples of laughter, which assured me he was a success in the kitchen. It was arranged that a second bed should be placed in the man-servant's room, who, as it happened, was out for a whole holiday; but being a good-tempered fellow, we felt certain he would not object.

My delight was beyond description, for the production of our play promised to be, at least, an artistic success. I related my adventure in the green-room that evening, and the company there were all highly pleased that after our hitherto vain search and anxiety I had succeeded at last.

On our return home we were informed that Biafra, being sleepy, had gone to bed early ; but soon after midnight we were aroused by shouts and screams from the top of the house. Mr. Bancroft rushed upstairs, while I waited on the landing in a dressing-gown which I had hastily thrown on, wondering what could be the matter, for I heard a terrible scrimmage going on. By-and-by down came Mr. Bancroft, so convulsed with laughter that I could not get a word of explanation from him for some time : he sat on the stairs and positively became hysterical. At last he told me that our man-servant, having had permission to visit a relative out of town, had come home rather late, and as he had a latch-key lent to him, the other servants had gone to bed. It appears there was an inference of the man being somewhat unsteady after his relative's hospitality, so that on entering his room and seeing two beds, he no doubt made up his mind that he was either in the wrong house, or that he saw double. It turned out that he stood in the middle of the room, hoping gradually to get the vision of the two beds into proper focus ; but finding the effort a failure, he approached one of them, and encountered, for the first time, Biafra. Paralyzed with terror, the poor fellow stood staring aghast at what he thought was the devil. Suddenly the boy opened his large black eyes, and rolled them wildly about, eventually fixing them on the new-comer, who gave a loud yell, which so terrified Biafra that he jumped out of bed. This intensified the situation, and the one screamed against the other until Mr. Bancroft discovered them. It took a considerable time to calm either of them—the boy was strange in the house, and only half awake ; the other, being ignorant of the little nigger's arrival, thought the end of the world had come.

The next morning I took my black boy in triumph to the theatre, where he produced a great effect; he was instructed by me what to do in the business of the scenes he was to appear in. I found him intelligent and most obedient to everything *I* told him to do, but the instruction must all come from *me*; he would take no notice of any one else, not even of Mr. Bancroft. He always seemed to recognize the fact of having been handed over to me, and that he was in consequence *my* slave. If others happened to tell him to do the smallest thing, he would stand still and look at me, waiting for *my* orders. This became somewhat of a tax, because it was the same at home, and the servants found him difficult to manage downstairs. He helped to wait at table very fairly, but always stood at my elbow, with his big eyes fixed on mine, not looking at any one else.

If a funny thing was said by any one but me, he never smiled; but if I laughed he would at once laugh with me. Whenever he got into disgrace with the other servants, which was very often, I was called upon to scold him; and it was the only thing which had any effect. I could shake him, rebuke him, and threaten him, he would take it all from *me*; but if any one else attempted to scold him, he would throw things at them, spit at them, and shout at them. It may be conceded, therefore, that he was, to say the least, an anxiety in the house; but so desirous was I for the completeness of our play, that I determined to endure the inconvenience at home for the sake of it. I consoled myself with the thought that when the piece was produced he would be more at the theatre, and the servants at home would be rid of him for the time. This fact seemed to reconcile them to his stopping in the house. The eventful night arrived, and all the appointments in the comedy were so

exquisitely perfect in their beauty and correctness that I could not help feeling very proud. One seemed to be living in the last century, and when the curtain rose on the opening scene, we could hear the welcome murmurs of surprise and admiration everywhere. As the time drew near for my entrance as Lady Teazle, I felt very nervous. I knew that my dress was beautiful, white brocaded satin, profusely trimmed with old lace and pale blush-roses; powdered hair, dressed very high; a chaplet of roses and diamond ornaments, and Biafra to carry my long train. He looked a perfect picture in his laced scarlet coat and knee-breeches, his white turban and gilt dog-collar. He was, indeed, a magnificent contrast to my white gown, and when we entered, I was told the effect was charming. Biafra behaved most admirably; rarely stared at the mass of people in the theatre, but fixed his attention on me as usual. He followed me everywhere like a little dog, and obeyed my every look. Mr. Lewis Wingfield was so delighted with the boy's appearance, that he painted an admirable life-size head of him, which he most kindly presented to me.

While on the subject of our production of the *School for Scandal*, and before I end Biafra's adventures, I must tell of a little episode which so amused me at the time that I venture to think it may be worth alluding to. In the tea scene, the stage was crowded with guests and the musicians who accompanied the *minuet de la cour*. There was an old woman who was employed in the theatre to assist in the cleaning department. She was a poor, humble old thing, and, on account of her age, unable to work much; but we kept her about the place, letting her think herself useful, for her wages helped to support her little home. She had, although in this

humble position, a very striking face and aristocratic features, being tall and thin, with perfectly white hair. It occurred to me one day while watching her with a duster in her hand, thinking, poor old soul, that she was very busy, but really doing nothing, that she would, if well dressed, make an effective figure among Lady Sneerwell's guests ; and she certainly looked every inch a *grande dame* of the period in her deep red broché sac, trimmed with black Spanish point, her high powdered wig, her feathers and court patches, which really seemed to assist her already finely-cut features ; with these and her long Suède gloves, some handsome paste ornaments which I lent her, and large black fan, she presented a conspicuously handsome picture. The dear old lady was delighted with her fine clothes, and walked through the scene exactly as she had been instructed ; of course she had nothing to say, that was impossible ! But, when I walked amongst the guests to speak to them (*sotto voce*) I came across my old *protégée*, and it struck me at the moment to address her with particular respect, so I made a low curtsey, to which she intelligently responded, and, suiting the word to the action, I said, “ I hope your ladyship is well to-night ? ” To prove to me that she was equal to the occasion, the dear old thing replied, “ *I'm nicely, thank yer, mum !* ” This was heard by no one but me, *fortunately*.

But to return to our black boy, who was becoming more and more unpopular at home, for complaints came pouring in every day. The cook could not keep him from the sweets, and he was in constant hot water with the other servants ; his appetite was enormous ; he would get the potatoes and throw them about the kitchen, hide the housemaid's boots in the hot oven, and the manservant complained that “ he snored so loud he could get

no sleep for him, and the more he threw things at his head the louder he snored."

One day he was sent into the stables with a message. He had no sooner made his appearance there than the horses shied, the dogs barked, and the noise was so great that the coachman was obliged to turn him out. None of the animals ever took to him; the cats arched their backs, and, with swollen tails, would spit at him as he passed near them. My parrot, who is a splendid talker and perfectly tame, became silent in his presence, and simply meditated. In fact, the cook remarked, "The 'ouse ain't the same 'ouse!"

Mr. Bancroft and I at last consulted whether it would not be advisable to take him on the box of the carriage when we drove out, and so relieve the kitchen-folk for the afternoon, which, with his work at the theatre at night, would clear the house of him for the greater half of the day. A happy thought! but I shall never forget the coachman's face when Biafra appeared for the first time by his side. It was a study. We soon had to give up our brilliant idea, for a crowd of boys would collect and jeer if we pulled up, and, while we were driving, would often shout after the boy and give imitations of the sweeps, or cry out, "'Ere's a Christy Minstrel." One day we stopped to make a purchase, and on leaving the shop were horrified at finding Biafra fighting on the pavement with three or four young street ruffians. He had jumped down to punish them for their insolence, and the scene was awful. We got him home, and I need not say that, greatly to the coachman's glee, he occupied the box no more. I soon found that he was making himself obnoxious at the theatre also amongst the servants. He would spite them by playing all sorts of tricks. He would lie down in the darkened passages, and, being black,

he could not be seen, consequently the unwary would tumble over him. I could always influence him while present, but the moment I went away he would misconduct himself again. It all became such an anxiety at last—what with the fear of losing our servants, and complaints pouring in from all quarters day and night—that we resolved to return Biafra to his master; so, after a seven weeks' run, our black friend was restored to his former and, perhaps, more congenial position. Just before his final exit, he thrust all the cook's caps up the chimney! The next time I required a black page was in *Masks and Faces*, but I contented myself with an imitation one, as the genuine article had been too much for me.

Letters from Wilkie Collins, W. Creswick, W. P. Frith, and J. M. Bellew, on production of "School for Scandal."

From WILKIE COLLINS.

"90, Gloucester Place, Portman Square,
"April 6, 1874.

"MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

"I tried to call at Pleydell House yesterday, but the London distances—I was obliged to go first to South Kensington—were too much for me.

"The get-up of the piece is simply wonderful; I never before saw anything, within the space, so beautiful and so complete: but the splendid costumes and scenery did not live in my memory as Mrs. Bancroft's acting does. I don't know when I have seen anything so fine as her playing of the great scene with Joseph; the truth and beauty of it, the marvellous play of expression in her face, the quiet and beautiful dignity of her repentance, are beyond all praise.

"I cannot tell *you* or tell *her* how it delighted and affected me. You, too, played admirably. The 'key' was, perhaps, a little too low; but the conception of the man's character I thought most excellent. I left my seat in a red-hot fever of enthusiasm. I have all sorts of things to say about the acting—which cannot be said here—when we next meet. I heartily congratulate you in the meantime.—Yours ever,

"WILKIE COLLINS."

From the Veteran Actor, W. CRESWICK.

"8, Bloomsbury Square, June 1, 1874.

"MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

"Accept my best thanks for your very kind and courteous note, also for a most interesting and pleasant evening's entertainment.

"Permit me likewise to congratulate Mrs. Bancroft and yourself upon a success so justly and honourably achieved. Your boldness, liberality, and taste in rearranging and mounting the play, instead of 'offending my prejudices,' most fully and thoroughly gratified them, more especially so, as I have ever thought that the revival of a great dramatic work should resemble the production of a grand book. The illustrations should be original, new, and more brilliant and appropriate than any upon the same subject that may have preceded it. The last edition should be the handsomest and the best, as it unquestionably is in this instance.

"It will be, I believe, a very long time before any one will be so rash as to attempt another illustrated edition of the *School for Scandal*.

"Be so good as to present my best compliments and thanks to Mrs. Bancroft, and believe me, yours faithfully,

"S. B. Bancroft, Esq."

"WM. CRESWICK."

A letter much appreciated by us from the distinguished Academician, Mr. Frith, will be welcomed by the reader, if only on the score of his recent great success in another walk of life.

From W. P. FRITH.

“7, Pembridge Villas, Bayswater, July 31, 1874.

“MY DEAR MR. BANCROFT,—

“You and all your people gave me and mine very great pleasure last night. I am afraid to say how many times I have seen the *School for Scandal*, and how many great actors and actresses I have seen in it. I won’t say but that on some occasions one or two of the parts have been better filled; but take your cast altogether, it is one that no other theatre could show, and the great play was rendered with high intelligence.

“Mrs. Bancroft was, as she always is, perfect. To me the minuet was one of the most delightful bits of grace and exquisite taste ever seen. It took me back to the days of my great-grandmother, a hundred years ago.

“May your shadows never grow less!—Always faithfully yours,

“S. B. Bancroft, Esq.”

“W. P. FRITH.”

From J. M. BELLEW, very shortly before he died.

“Friday, May 29, 1874.

“MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

“England is my nation, London is my dwelling-place, 16, Circus Road is my location, and Bellew my nomination.

“As you won’t come and see me, I write to inquire how you are.—Yours very truly,

“J. M. BELLEW.”

I will repeat a little story which Bellew told us of a neighbour of his, who for years wore one of the most palpable of wigs, being at the same time quite convinced in his own mind that no one shared the mysterious secret; for he even went so far with the evident deception as to have several wigs which he wore in turn, the hair of each of them being of different lengths. Bellew one morning met his friend just as he was leaving his house, and asked if they could walk together. "Delighted," said the owner of the coffee-coloured "jasey," "if you are going towards Bond Street, where I must stop to *have my hair cut.*"

A Double of Ourselves as told by Mr. Bancroft.

I received a letter from a debt-collector living in Camden Town, stating that he was instructed by Mr. ——, the proprietor of the —— Hotel, and also of some livery stables, at Ventnor, to apply to me for immediate payment of an account for the hire of carriages and horses in the previous September, while staying at the said hotel, and left unpaid when I went away. Having passed the whole of my holiday in Switzerland and Venice, and never having been in Ventnor in my life, I was a little puzzled by this application. At first I thought it must be a practical joke, but eventually, after a further request for payment, I answered the letter—rather angrily, I think—pointing out the mistake which had been made, and stating my real whereabouts at the time I was charged with driving about the Isle of Wight.

From the debt-collector I heard no more; but one evening, a few weeks later, when I had arrived at the theatre and was reading some letters before dressing for

the stage, the hall-porter knocked at the door of my room, said that a gentleman wanted to see me, and handed me a card.

My surprise may be imagined when I read that my visitor was the proprietor of the —— Hotel, Ventnor. I at once told the hall-keeper to show him into the green-room, which, so early in the evening, was unoccupied, and in a few minutes I went downstairs.

“Good-evening.” “Good-evening, sir.” “You have asked to see me. I am Mr. Bancroft.” “So I see, sir,” said “mine host” cheerfully, and with a decidedly provincial accent.

I looked at him well. His face was frank and honest, and his manner self-possessed.

“You have applied to me,” I next said, “for money you say I owe you?” “Yes, sir; the amount remained unpaid when you left my hotel in September.” “When I left your hotel! Do you mean to assert that my appearance has not at once convinced you there must be some mistake?” “Not on my side, I think, sir.” “Do you mean to say,” I still asked, fairly amazed, “that you believe you recognize in me the person who owes you this money?” “I see no difference,” was the immediate reply, “except that he had a moustache.”

At this time, and throughout my holiday, my face was clean-shaven, for I was acting the part of “Joseph Surface.”

“Tell me something more of this,” I said; “for your manner, at any rate, convinces me of your honesty.” “I thank you, sir,” replied my visitor; “and but for your straightforward denial, I would have sworn in any witness-box that you were the person who, with a lady, passed at my house for nearly a month as Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, of the Prince of Wales’s Theatre.”

Here, I thought, was my chance of convincing the man

he had been imposed upon. I turned up the gas directly under a large photograph of my wife, and said, "That is a portrait of Mrs. Bancroft."

My visitor rose, looked at it well, then said, "Yes, and a very good likeness it is, sir."

I was nearly paralyzed with amazement, and hardly remember what passed next; but I feel certain that the landlord, although his eyesight was throughout the interview my enemy, became as impressed by the honesty of my repudiation as I was by the frankness of his assertions.

I learnt that our doubles had lived for a month on the best his house afforded, that at the end of their stay there was a little difficulty about the bill; they said they could not pay then, but would send the money from London, as the theatre was about to reopen (a statement which agreed with the newspaper advertisements), and that they must go.

To this proposal "mine host" naturally objected. Eventually the man was allowed to depart alone, leaving the lady with her luggage to be redeemed. The money for the hotel bill, it seems, was sent in a few days, and the hostage released; the claim sent into me being for carriage and horse hire which had been overlooked at the time, the livery-stable business being separate from that of the hotel.

When, at last, my visitor went away, he felt, I feel assured, full of conflicting emotions, hardly knowing which of his senses he best could trust.

We neither of us to our knowledge have ever seen either of these people, and can give no opinion of this apparently singular likeness—all the more remarkable as it applied to two people. Sometimes I have wondered if the lady could have been the person of whom Mrs. Bancroft writes in an earlier chapter. One day, shortly before

the interview I have related, and prior to the reopening of the theatre, I was asked by Meredith Ball, our musical conductor, how I liked a new play which had just been produced at the Criterion Theatre. To my answer that I had not seen it yet, he seemed greatly surprised, and exclaimed, "Not seen it! why, weren't you there last night?" "Last night," I replied; "certainly not. I have only just returned to England; in fact, reached Charing Cross last evening." "That's very extraordinary," said Ball. "One of the band, who has been with me for years, and has been filling up the vacation by playing in the orchestra at the Criterion, told me just now that he saw you and Mrs. Bancroft there last evening in a private box." Afterwards this friendly musician, who of course knew us both quite well, could hardly be convinced of his error. Later on two young friends of ours wrote home from Italy to say, after expressing their surprise at our being abroad at that time of the year, "that we had both cut them dead twice on the same day, first in the street, and then at a theatre;" while reference to an English newspaper would have told them that we were playing in *Caste* every night.

At a large party given by Irving, I remember one of his guests, who kindly offered to be of any service in the matter if he could, telling me that he had read my little story in the Christmas number, and that he could support the truth of it, so far as that he had passed some weeks at the Isle of Wight hotel just after "Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft," as they were called through this "uncanny" resemblance, had left, and was quite under the impression that we had been staying there. To conclude, only recently I was reproached by the celebrated novelist, James Payn, with having ignored his salutations in the King's Road, Brighton, where at the time I had not been

for at least a year, as he was amazed to hear—his conviction that he was bowing to me without receiving a response being confirmed by Mrs. Payn, who was by his side at the time.

What further mischief has been done I cannot say, and it is impossible to foretell the sequel, should there ever be one. How many forms this incident might take! Some day, perhaps, we may hear strange disclosures of other personations; or *we*, perhaps, may be the recipients of legacies or of gifts meant for *them*—who knows?

Tom Hood and “Piggy.”

Clever and kindly Tom Hood, not long before he died, gave me a bound copy of that droll yet sympathetic nursery story, written by his distinguished father, the poet and wit, entitled “The Headlong Career and Woeful Ending of Precocious Piggy.” Tom Hood often told me how, as a little boy, he had enjoyed the comical history, when it was related to him by his father, who had written it especially for the amusement of his children, and who were all, more or less, deeply interested in Piggy’s adventures. I have drawn many a laugh and many a tear from the little ones to whom I have read the story, and my copy, a gift from the son, who so cleverly illustrated his father’s quaint fancy, is much prized by me. Before presenting me with the book, Tom Hood added a pen-and-ink drawing which represents “Piggy” in evening dress, with crush hat, gloves, and opera-glasses complete. Piggy looks remarkably funny, and one cannot resist laughing heartily at the cleverness of the

sketch. Tom Hood also added the following verse to the illustration :—

“ ‘ Where are you going to, you little pig ? ’
 ‘ To the new Prince of Wales’s, dressed out in full fig,’
 ‘ In full fig, young pig ? ’
 ‘ A pig in full fig ! ’
 You’ll see Marie Wilton, you lucky young pig ! ’ ”

A Letter from Miss Ellen Terry on the subject of her Engagement to appear as “ Portia ” in “ The Merchant of Venice.”

“ DEAR MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT,—

“ I received the form of engagement this morning, together with the kind little letters. Accept my best thanks for your expressions of goodwill towards me. I cannot tell you how pleased I am that I seem to see in you a reflection of my own feelings with regard to this engagement.

“ My work will, I feel certain, be *joyful* work, and joyful work *should* turn out *good* work. You will be pleased, and I shall be pleased at your pleasure, and it would be hard, then, if the good folk ‘ in front ’ are not pleased.—Believe me, I am *all ways*, sincerely yours,

“ ELLEN TERRY.”

A Letter from George Augustus Sala.

“ 68, Thistle Grove, Brompton, Friday, April 23, 1875.

“ Please, Mrs. Bancroft, may we come to see the *Merchant of Venice*? I only returned from the ‘ Rialto ’

last Tuesday, and I am very anxious to behold the much-talked-of *mise-en-scène* at the Prince of Wales's. It may comfort Mr. Coghlan to know that I bought 2½ yards of *smaniglio*, or Venice gold chain, from Shylock himself, and that he was the quietest and most gentlemanly Jew I ever met, but a desperate 'do.'

"If you can spare seats for Monday next, you will delight Mrs. Sala, and inspire gratitude in the heart of your most faithful servant,

"GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA."

A Strange Vision.

I must tell of what was to me a sad loss. Poor Lady Harrington was suffering from her old winter complaint, bronchitis, and had been for some time so ill as to be confined to her bed. I had received a dictated letter from her, full, as usual, of kind thoughts and affectionate messages, saying how ill she was, but still hoping to recover soon. I was thinking about her very much, and was naturally anxious, for this malady at her age was serious, and repeated winter attacks left her less able each time to bear their recurrence.

On the afternoon of Friday, December 27, 1867, my mind was unaccountably full of thoughts about her. I had been making some purchases in Regent Street, and on my way home in a cab was wondering, as I was driven through the crowd of vehicles, if I should ever see her in her well-known carriage again, with its snuff-coloured "Petersham brown" body, the long brown coats, the silver hat-cords of the coachman and footman, the half-

crescents of white leather which formed part of the harness across the foreheads of the horses.

As this thought passed through my mind, I saw *distinctly* the carriage pass, and my dear friend sitting inside. I could scarcely believe my eyes, but as she drove by me she looked sadly at me, and kissed her hand to me, as was her custom whenever she saw me from a distance. What could this mean? I turned cold and wondered. The next morning I heard that she had died at the hour I thought I saw her. I shall never forget this incident.

A Startling Episode.

While waiting one day in Wellington Street in an open carriage for my husband, who was giving some orders at Madame Auguste's about the dresses, I was startled by a street-nigger coming towards me with a broad grin upon his black face. Concluding that he intended asking for money, I was preparing to give him something, when he stopped me by saying, "No, no, lady; I don't come a-begging!" I saw your kind face from the other side of the road, and when you smoiled I said to myself, "Why, I know who that is; there ain't another smoile like that nowheres. It's Miss Ma-arie Wilton, wot was at the Strand Theayter!" Seeing a wild stare of amazement on my face, he continued, "Oh, you don't remember me, miss?" How in the world could I recognize the creature with such a face—all niggers have such a strong family likeness! I wished the ground to open and let me through; my sable friend, however, did not observe my agitation and proceeded, "I was in the chorus at the

Strand Theayter, miss, when you was theer. Lor, how I used to watch you! I was up to my ears in love with you, miss!" *Such ears!* I wanted to scream! There I was, fixed in the carriage, and this man standing close to it with one foot on the step. He continued, "Since then I've tried many things, but failed in *heverythink!* If I had been hedgicated, I might 'ave been in a leadin' position like 'Enery Irving at the Lyceum, there. But 'ere I am reduced to doin' nigger business in the streets like this 'ere!" I gazed at him with horror. A tall, white hat, with a deep black band; red and white striped trousers, very short; a coat with the tails dragging on the ground; a large white collar, and a tie like a windmill, which every time he moved threatened to knock my bonnet off; a handkerchief, the size of a moderate table-cover, hanging from his pocket, and a large flower in his coat like an "ornament for your fire-stove." At last strains of "Ada with the Golden Hair" struck up close by, and with a sigh the nigger said, "Well, miss, dooty calls, and I must go." How thankful I was to dooty! "My pals is in the next street. If ever I see you again, I shall only take my hat off to you, and you won't mind that, I know, from a poor fellar wot is down in the world!" This touched me, and I made him accept some money; the poor fellow then said, "I 'umbly ask yer pardon, but I couldn't 'elp speakin' jist a word to you, for the sake of times gone by; good luck to you, miss, and God bless you!" This last sentence was spoken with pathos, and tears trickled down his cheeks, putting his face into half-mourning.

A few minutes later, as I was relating this experience to Mr. Bancroft, we encountered a nigger troupe in a street off the Strand, and there was my black dose vigorously playing the bones; he kept his word, but as

he raised his hat he fixed his eyes plaintively on me as he sang in chorus with "his pals":

"I fancy I can see her now,
Down at Farmer Fenn's,
A-pickin' up the new-laid eggs from the cow,
And milkin' the cocks and hens."

A Letter from Mrs. Chas. Kean after seeing "Sweethearts."

"47, Queensborough Terrace, Kensington Gardens,
"March 28, 1875.

"DEAR MADAM,—

"I have been so long ill that I have seen nothing of what has been going on in the theatrical world; but I had a great desire to see you in *Sweethearts*, and did so on Saturday. Allow me now to thank you much for the enjoyment you afforded me by your charming acting as Jenny Northcott.

"Perhaps it may not be unpleasing to know that a very old actress thought it perfection. Your style is all your own, and touchingly true to nature.

"Again thanking you, believe me, truly yours,

"ELLEN KEAN."

I remember during the second act, early in the run of this little play, a gentleman who occupied a stall close to the stage being so palpably unable to control his emotion that he attracted the attention of his neighbour—a lady—so markedly, that at last he turned to her and said: "Yes, madam, I am crying, and I am proud of it!"

From the great Italian Actor, Salvini, after receiving a Small
Gift from Me.

"Juin 9, 1875.

"CHÈRE MADAME,—

"Que vous êtes aimable !

"Je tiendrai votre joli cadeau comme un doux souvenir
de votre sincère amitié. Ce sera un précieux talisman qui
suivra le reste de ma carrière artistique, et qui, je suis
sûr, m'apportera du bonheur.

"J'aurai le plaisir d'entendre la nouvelle pièce que
vous allez représenter Lundi prochain, et j'accepterai la
loge que vous avez eu l'aimabilité de me proposer.

"Acceptez de nouveau mes remerciements, et croyez-
moi.—Votre dévoue,

"TOMMASO SALVINI."

Holiday Adventures.

For a time we travelled with a large and cumbersome
joint-stock portmanteau, which we eventually christened
the "Eilgut," for the reason that it was constantly being
lost for three or four days together, and after telegrams
had been sent in every direction to trace its whereabouts,
and my anxiety had reached the highest pitch, I was in-
formed that it was coming by the "Eilgut," a sort of
petite vitesse, and very slow method of progression. I
lost this wretched box so often that I determined to use
it no more. (Ultimately it was degraded to an appear-
ance in *Diplomacy*, in which play it was carried across the

stage as Dora and Julian Beauclerc are about to start for their honeymoon. I don't know where it is now, and I don't care!) To return, I was constantly finding, on my arrival at various hotels, that this unfortunate and troublesome trunk was missing. On reaching Lucerne this year we discovered that our miserable box was again lost; what to do I could not imagine. We proceeded to the Kaltbad with nothing but our travelling-bags, and days passed without news of the trunk. Several ladies, whom I knew, helped me, and I was positively dressed for nearly a week by subscription. I was sitting in my room one day completely heart-broken, and arranging to return to England as soon as possible, when I heard in the corridor an unusual commotion, and presently a chorus of voices to the tune of "See the Conquering Hero comes." I opened my room door and there saw a procession, headed by my old friend Mr. Palgrave Simpson, who carried an alpenstock, like a master of the ceremonies, followed by the wretched "Eilgut," elaborately decorated, and borne in triumph by two porters. After marching twice up and down the corridor, the cause of such frequent discomfort was deposited in my room, and then and there I vowed that never again would I bring the "Eilgut" abroad, and I kept my word.

The loss of my box and the want of clothes did not finish my list of annoyances during my stay this year at the Kaltbad, as I was robbed of my sleep by an unpleasant next-door neighbour who snored terribly. The noise he made sounded more like the growl of some animal than the breathing of a human being. I watched for my persecutor day after day, but could never find him. I looked at every man I saw on the terrace who seemed likely to be a snorer with suspicion; but more than this I could never do. I found out his name in the bureau—

he was a German—but from the description I received there, failed to identify him. I felt sure he was a big man, for only a big man could produce *such* a snore. During the day my *bête noir* would be out on some excursion; at *table d'hôte* I used to search with my eyes all round the room, but always failed to fix my accusation definitely on any one. I hoped for every day to be his last in the hotel, but at night I found he still remained. If I hurried to bed early in order to get an hour or two's rest before he retired, it so happened that on those very nights he had returned from some expedition and had gone to bed early also. When he was tired the noise was louder and deeper, so I could always tell when his day had been fatiguing, for the sound was like the snore of a tired bull. It became so terrible at last that I decided upon leaving, for the hotel was too crowded for me to change my room, and I was literally ill for want of sleep, so we determined to go down by the little mountain railway to Vitznau, to catch the steamer for Lucerne, and there secure rooms for a few days. We took our seats in the train, each carriage of which is open, and simply divided into benches, and after we had started, I was on the point of dropping off to sleep (completely worn out for want of rest), when suddenly my eyes caught the number of the hated room my cruel tormentor occupied, marked in plain chalk figures on the soles of a pair of boots. There he was, with his ugly feet up—two benches off—on the opposite side, reading a newspaper, which completely hid the upper part of him. I eagerly watched him, and when at last he dropped his paper and the face was revealed, behold, instead of the big, burly creature I expected, he was quite a little undersized bit of humanity! “Who from such a stem would look for such a”—snore? I was consoled when I found the porter had chalked his

ugly shoes for the last time, and we learnt that he had taken his departure from the hotel.

Before returning to our mountain home, we went on to Lucerne for the day, and on board the steamer met the Duke of Connaught, whom I at first did not recognize in his suit of dittos and pot hat. His Royal Highness was pleased to enter into conversation with us, during which he noticed that several people on board were staring at me, and whispering to each other. The Duke was much amused, and laughingly remarked, "You see, Mrs. Bancroft, I have the advantage of you here ; they all know you, but they don't know me."

After our return to the Kaltbad, we were standing one day on the terrace enjoying the beautiful view—the atmosphere being exceptionally clear, while the sun glittered as he well knows how in those high regions. Our attention was suddenly attracted by a hurried rush and bustle on the part of the waiters and maids, who were running about in all directions, hastily shutting and securing the *jalousies* of the hotel windows. On inquiry, we were answered by the *portier*, "L'orage ! l'orage !" and, sure enough, on looking in the direction he pointed towards, we saw a strange sight : a huge, black cloud was turning the corner of the opposite mountain like an angry war-horse, and from its nostrils came streaks of fire. It was followed by another and another ; they seemed to glide so rapidly in frenzied pursuit, that one stood wondering what they were flying from. This was "Monsieur l'Orage," whose advent was always known by the furious *avant coureur* I have described. It was the most awful storm I ever witnessed even in the mountains, where sunshine and tempest are so often mingled. It was, indeed, a sudden change from gay to grave. The wind howled as if all the wild animals in the world had

been lashed into a fury, and, maddened with rage, were going to devastate the earth. The thunder was terrible, and filled one with a religious awe, as if it meant the end of all things. The lightning came like knives cutting the clouds, with which it was at war, into shreds; then the hailstones, which were as large as filberts, fell with such force that they seemed to split the air as they descended. It was a terrible but grand experience. Presently a change, as sudden as the storm, restored to us the giant sun, and all was calm and beautiful again. In the evening we were discussing this event, when we were told a sad story of what had happened on the lake below us. A young Frenchman and his bride, who were passing part of their honeymoon at Lucerne, had engaged a boat for a sort of love-cruise, and although the boatman warned them of the danger of going alone, as a storm was brewing, the love-husband declined his services. Not long afterwards the anticipated storm broke out, and as the tiny boat with its happy load was about to turn a corner of the lake, the sudden squall capsized it. The husband was saved, but his bride, who but a few moments before was so joyous, so contented with her fate, was drowned. The sympathy for the poor stricken bridegroom was universal; for a time he lost his reason, and could not be convinced that his young wife was dead. It was, indeed, a sad ending to so much happiness, and the story cast a gloom upon the place for a long time. As the ill-starred girl lay in her last sleep, one felt the words of Queen Gertrude:

“I thought thy bride-bed to have deck’d, sweet maid,
And not have strew’d thy grave.”

Apropos of these sudden changes in the weather on the Lake of Lucerne, there is an old well-known rhyme about

its chief mountainous feature, the rugged Pilatus, which is made to act as a sort of local barometer. The lines run as follow :

“If Pilatus wears his cap, serene will be the day;
If his collar he puts on, you may venture on your way.
But if his sword he wields, at home you’d better stay.”

The doggerel reminds me of a version of the prophecy given by a little German boy, who was learning English, and mixed up the two languages thus :

“Wen Pilatus hat sein hut
Den de wedder’s very gut;
Wen Pilatus hat sein degen,
Den you know it’s going to regen;
Wen Pilatus hat sein schwarz,
Den de wedder’s werser and werser.”

Practical Jokes by Mr. Bancroft at the Rigi Kaltbad.

Those were the days of youth and high spirits, and when I am afraid I must confess to have been something of a practical joker; even in such a boyish fashion as one night, when a friend and I had the outside of the hotel to ourselves—for the chance happened while a dance was going on in the drawing-room, which opened by very large French windows on to the terrace—driving some Swiss cows, which had strayed down the mountain, into the midst of the dancers, who scattered themselves in all directions with cries of “Les vaches! les vaches!” We must have plagued the musicians terribly, too, for we were always busy in the morning hiding the drum-sticks. The performer on the noisy instrument they belonged to

passed much of his time in violent gesticulations, and uttering the oft-repeated question, "Wo sind die Trommel-schlägel?"

"*Masks and Faces.*"

FROM CHARLES READE TO MRS. BANCROFT.

"DEAR PEG,

"You are too much for me; and after this I don't measure my wit against yours for a month or two. I cave in, as the Yankees say, and submit at once to your proposal."

On reaching home after the first performance he wrote the following lines, and sent with them in the morning an autograph letter of Margaret Woffington's:

"Presented by Charles Reade to his friend Mrs. Bancroft upon her admirable personation of Peg Woffington in *Masks and Faces*.—C. R., Nov. 6, 1875."

Let us follow this allusion to a letter of the real woman with one from her stage representative, which may have the interest of explaining a new view of the character of Woffington as she appears in the play.

I may say that Margaret Woffington became a very favourite part of mine, and I was proud of having given a new version of the woman's character and accentuated the tender side of her nature.

The Reason why I gave a New Reading to Margaret Woffington.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

DEAR ———,

You ask me to explain to you why I played Peg Woffington so differently from previous readings of the part, giving another version almost of her character, and making her appear as a different woman from what the authors seemingly intended her to be, and as she had been represented by other distinguished actresses. All great parts are capable of various conceptions, and it is often a thankless office to play a character which has been originally created by some one else, especially by an actress of position, and I felt this difficulty very keenly when I agreed to accept the part of Peg. With the public I felt safe, for some years had elapsed since *Masks and Faces* had been seen by them, and a new generation had, in the meantime, sprung up. But many of the critics remembered the great original, Mrs. Stirling; and when Charles Reade first spoke to me on the subject, I urged that the task would be a hard one for me, and I was frightened at the thought of it. There was, as far as I could see, but one way for me out of the difficulty, to treat the part in a distinctly new way; so I set to work and read the book carefully to find if it was possible to clothe Peg in a new dress. I had never seen the piece played, although I have a faint remembrance of its being acted somewhere in the country. Well, I first of all read the play through two or three times, as is my custom, to make myself perfectly acquainted with its argument. I then gave my whole attention to the character of Margaret

Woffington, as she is depicted in the play ; I pulled the part to pieces and put it together again according to my own lights and fancies. I felt a pleasure in doing this, and I will tell you why and how. While I am studying a part I never lose sight of it. I get between the lines and round about their meaning by reading them again and again until I am able to understand perfectly their purpose, which I know is the only way to arrive at that under-current of feeling which should travel from actor to audience. I study every emotion that the character is capable of, and then decide upon the rendering which touches me most and is best suited to my method and style. At last I absolutely live in the part, and associate myself so closely with it, that by the time I step on to the stage to play it, I am for the time, as it were, in thought and feeling, the person I represent.

When I read Peg Woffington I was deeply impressed by the beauty of the words she had to speak in her serious scenes. I soon felt that one who could utter such sentiments and make so great a sacrifice must be more than an ordinary woman, and possessing a nature far above her surroundings, capable of good deeds and noble aspirations. Her words in the first scene addressed to the man she loves, and to whom she confides her innermost thoughts, telling him how weary to her is the emptiness of her life, point to a superior mind. She wants to be a good woman, and asks him to help her. He teaches her to trust him, and promises all that she asks, and she is happy.

Here is an extract from the scene :

“I can only love my superior. Be frank and honest as the day, and you will be my superior, and I shall love you and bless the hour you shone on my artificial life.

It is no easy task: to be my friend is to respect me that I may respect myself the more; to be my friend is to come between me and the temptations of an unprotected life—the recklessness of a vacant heart."

She believes implicitly in this man, and bids him fill up the vacant place in her heart, thinking him worthy and honest. But when she discovers that he has betrayed, deceived, insulted her by presenting himself to her as an unmarried man, when all the time he had a young wife, her love now gives room for all the bitterness of injured pride, hatred, and revenge—revenge against him, and her, and all the world:

"He shall rue the hour he trifled with a heart and brain like mine.

"TRIPLET: But, his poor wife!

"PEG: His wife! Are wives' hearts the only hearts that feel, and throb, and—break! Let his wife look to herself. It is not from me that mercy can come to her."

Then in the scene when, full of venom, she overhears a conversation between the young wife and poor old Triplet, the only friend who clings to Peg, the gentle sweetness and innocence of Mabel so affect her that her revenge and anger disappear, leaving the beauty of her nature to prompt her to make the greatest sacrifice in her power.

Here is a fragment of the scene between the two women:

"PEG: Such as you are the diamonds of the world! Angel of truth and goodness, you have conquered. The poor heart which we both overrate shall be yours again.

In my hands 'tis but painted glass at best, but set in the lustre of your love, it may become a priceless jewel. Will you trust me?

“MABEL: With my life!”

Surely a woman who can utter such words must be by nature good and capable of fine emotions. She is sensitive, lovable, trusting and charitable, passionate, headstrong and impulsive, ready to act upon a revengeful impulse, however she might regret it afterwards; she pines for honest friendship and finds it not, and in the last act one can see how her nature is warped and nearly spoiled. Read her farewell speech to Mabel, so simple, true, and pathetic:

“MABEL: In what way can I ever thank you?

“PEG: When hereafter, in your home of peace, you hear harsh sentence passed on us, whose lot is admiration—rarely love, triumph, but never tranquillity—think sometimes of Margaret Woffington, and say stage-masks may cover honest faces, and hearts beat true beneath a tinselled robe.”

Well, as the play was originally acted, after this touching farewell she goes off into laughter, and ends the play with a rhymed comic tag. Now, does not the idea of this jar upon your senses, after all the beautiful sentiments which she has expressed throughout the play? I could not have given any effect to the original end, because I could not feel it; it seemed unnatural; it was against my theory of Peg as I read her, and if Charles Reade had not allowed me to alter the end of the play I could not have acted the part. It was some time before I could bring him round to my way of thinking, so I illustrated

my meaning by acting the last scene to him as I wished it to be done. I explained to him that, after his exquisitely-written farewell to Mabel, having restored the husband to the wife, with her own heart breaking all the while, she could not at once burst into comedy—for, although she despised the husband for his deception and treachery, she could not root out in a moment from her breast the love she had felt for him.

The change which I suggested was this: After Peg's farewell to Mabel, and while kissing her, her eyes meet Ernest's; she stands gazing at him, as if to realize the fact that he could have been capable of so much cruelty. Pale with emotion, she hands Mabel to him and watches them as they are going through the doorway, casting a last lingering look upon him. At that beautiful moment of her anguish, crushed and broken, I am convinced that she should be left to commune with her thoughts, with no one by her side but her one tried old friend Triplet, upon whose breast she leans, and at last gives way to the tears which have up to now been denied her. The curtain should fall upon these two figures, leaving Peg in the hearts of her audience, who have followed her in her sorrows, and must, therefore, pity her. While deeply sympathizing with the wife, they must love Peg for her noble conduct, and weep with her in her suffering.

During my rehearsal in the drawing-room Charles Reade was silent; and at the end, when I looked at him for his opinion, I found that he was crying. He rose from his chair, took my hands in his, and said, "You are right, you have made me cry; your instincts are right; it shall be so." I acted it in this way, and the play has ever since been a great favourite with the public.

I now add, by way of postscript to these remarks a

few words I wrote with reference to the reality of emotion on the stage, which appeared in *Longman's Magazine* :—

“ The performance of a moving situation, without the true ring of sensibility in the actor, must fail to affect any one. An emotional break in the voice must be brought about naturally, and by a true appreciation of the sentiment, or what does it become? I can only compare it to a bell with a wooden tongue—it makes a sound, but there it ends. I cannot simulate suffering without an honest sympathy with it. I hold that without great nervous sensibility no one can act pathos. It is a casket with the jewel absent. The voice in emotion must be prompted by the heart; and if that is ‘out of tune and harsh,’ why then, indeed, the voice is ‘like sweet bells jangled.’ I was once much impressed by a small child’s criticism. He watched for a long time, silently and attentively, a scene of great emotional interest between two people. When asked what he thought of it, he answered, ‘I like that one best.’ ‘Why?’ ‘She speaks like telling the truth, and the other speaks like telling lies.’ What criticism can be finer than this? One was acting straight from the heart, the other from not even next door but one to it.”

Letter from Sir William Fergusson.

“ 16, George Street, Hanover Square, W.,
“ *March 15, 1876.*

“ **DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—**

“ I have to thank you most heartily for the great treat of last night. I have rarely enjoyed myself more thoroughly at the theatre. I was familiar with the

play in former days, when Mrs. Stirling and Webster were in all their force ; and, though prepared by newspaper and other reports to be pleased, I fancied that old recollections would cause me to feel a blank.

“ From the beginning to the end last night my interest never flagged ; and, with pleasant memories of the past, I cannot refrain from saying to you and your good man how truly I was gratified.

“ Both of you must be much fatigued with such hard work, and I sincerely wish you a continuance of health and strength for your arduous labours.

“ We suppose ourselves considerable theatrical critics in this house, and I am glad to say that we are all of the same opinion in regard to the enjoyment of last evening.

“ With kind regards to Squire, I remain, yours very sincerely,

“ WM. FERGUSSON.”

One of Sothern's Practical Jokes.

Sothern soon found out it was the custom for the oldest resident among the guests for the time being to preside at the little *table d'hôte*, over which they talked out their day's sport, and that it was the rule for the chairman always to say grace. The joker one evening learnt by accident, not long before the dinner-hour, that the visitor who had for some days presided had received a telegram which compelled a hurried packing up, and his departure. The spirit of mischief prompted Sothern to send a little note in the name of the landlord to all the other guests, some dozen or fifteen—of course, privately

and separately—couched in these words: “Our esteemed president, I regret to say, will not be at dinner this evening. May I venture to request you to have the kindness to say grace in his absence? The signal for the same will be two sharp knocks upon the sideboard.” The signal, at the proper moment, was of course given by Sothern, who was more than repaid by the glee with which he often told how all the guests rose to a man, as at a word of command, each commencing to pronounce his favourite form of grace; and then, with all sorts of blundering apologies to each other, they resumed their seats.

A Romance on a Mountain.

Anecdotes of eminent people are generally interesting, as I think the following incident in the life of so old a friend of the public as the eminent musician, Sir Julius Benedict, will be. It occurred during this stay at the Kaltbad, where we were much amused by constantly discovering strange likenesses amongst the visitors to many of our acquaintances and friends, until at last we spoke of them by the names of those whom they resembled. There was an old lady in the hotel whose features so wonderfully resembled Sir Julius Benedict, that we never called her, among ourselves, by any other name. Whether reading, writing, sitting, or walking, she still was the living image of Sir Julius.

One terribly wet day, when we were quite in cloudland, the mist being so dense that nothing could be seen beyond the railings of the terrace, and few had ventured beyond it, who should appear, to our amazement, but the

veritable Sir Julius himself, having, in spite of the weather, come up from Lucerne for the purpose of seeing the Rigi.

He told us that when he started it was finer, and he was determined not to turn back, as he had never seen the Rigi, and was obliged to return to England on the following day, adding, "I am old now, and may never have another opportunity, so I must see the mountain to-day, wet or dry."

With wonderful pluck he walked in the drenching rain from the Kaltbad to the Kulm, had a look round, but of course saw very little, for view there was none. He then walked down again to our hotel, and, after having coffee with us, expressed a wish to see the principal rooms. When we came to the large drawing-room, we saw the little old lady who went by the name of "Sir Julius" sitting reading in an easy-chair at the farther end of it. As we entered we looked at one another, and, with a smile, wondered whether we should draw attention to the resemblance. In a moment our merriment was changed to sentiment. No sooner had Sir Julius's name been uttered, and he had advanced a few steps towards his prototype, than the old lady looked up, fixed her eyes upon him for a moment, as though to realize, as it were, the fact that she was not dreaming, then rose from her chair, approached slowly, and with tears in her eyes exclaimed, "Ach, Jules! mein Gott, Sind sie es!" The old man started, and seemed suddenly affected, then, kissing both her hands, said, "Meine liebe! meine alte Freundin!" Greatly surprised at this touching recognition, we left the old couple alone, and they conversed for a considerable time together.

Before leaving, Sir Julius told us the history of this little drama. The old lady had been the object of his

earliest love, the first real romance of his life, and they had not met for full forty years.

Snowed Up.

The following letter of mine will describe our movements when we left the Lake of Lucerne :—

“ Saturday, September 2, 1876,
“ Hotel Monnet, Vevey.

“ MY DEAR ——,

“ We were driven here by bad weather in the mountains, and have found the sun again.

“ I will now tell you more of our holiday travels. When we left the Kaltbad, our journey was made very pleasant by having Arthur Cecil and Clement Scott as travelling companions. I had an attack of hay fever (my old enemy) on our way to Andermatt, which inflamed my eyes dreadfully and left me so miserable and depressed, that on our arrival at the hotel, instead of being able to join our party at dinner, I was glad to go to bed. By the next morning, however, I was quite myself again, and we continued our journey by carriage over the Furka Pass. At the little inn on the summit we read the Queen’s signature, written some years ago, as ‘Countess of Kent,’ in the visitors’ book. Our next stopping-place was the Rhone Glacier Hotel, where the flies were so thick on the ceiling of our room that it had the appearance of being covered with a heavy black pattern. I laugh as I write this, for when Arthur Cecil came down to breakfast he said, ‘Oh, Mrs. B., I have had such a night!’ It appeared that before going to bed he had pulled the bell-rope and disturbed what seemed a myriad of flies, which had taken up their quarters upon it;

having been so suddenly alarmed they were restless all night, and tormented poor Arthur dreadfully. The next morning the air was so full of these creatures that I was glad to dress quickly and get away. They were quite as tiresome as mosquitoes, only not so vicious.

“We made our way to the Eggischorn, the men walking to the top whilst I was taken up *chaise à porteur*. We were unfortunate in our weather during our three days’ stay there, and none of us were able to see much. It was intensely cold, and one night, when everybody got as near to the wood fire as possible, all looking the reverse of happy, I suggested to Mr. Cecil that he and I should try to make the evening a little pleasanter, so we began by playing games, and introduced one which chanced to be quite new to them all. I placed the visitors round me in a circle, standing in the middle myself as conductor of an imaginary orchestra, asking my ‘band’ to choose various musical instruments, and to play in dumb show so long as I conducted with the *bâton*; but of course you will know the game, so I need not describe it. All the visitors joined in it heart and soul, and it was most amusing to see the sage-looking scholars and pedagogues enjoying the fun. One of my orchestra was Dr. George Johnson, the celebrated physician, who, with his two daughters, was up there; another resident was Dr. Jex Blake. Thus we turned a dull evening into a merry one.”

[NOTE.—A long time afterwards, at an evening party, a gentleman came up to me, saying, “Let me bring myself to your recollection, Mrs. Bancroft. I was the Jew’s-harp in your Eggischorn orchestra some years ago.”]

“The next night, still wet and misty, the visitors seemed to look to us for help again, so with the addition of dumb crambo (as I have never seen it done before),

we sent them all to bed at midnight instead of 9.30, their usual hour. Even the tired servants could not be persuaded to retire to rest. When we left the hotel, the visitors turned out *en masse* to see us off. I forgot to tell you before that we met the young black Prince of Abyssinia, who was under the care of Dr. Jex Blake. He was highly intelligent and interesting to talk to. One day I found him reading 'The Last Days of Pompeii,' and I remarked that I had read the book three times myself. He answered, 'Well, I think I must read it all through again, I am so very pleased with it.'

"Then came a lovely walk over the Rieder Alp, and across the foot of the great Aletsch Glacier, up to the primitive little inn on the Bel Alp.

"After staying there three days we started for Brigue ; the morning was very cold, and Professor Tyndall, whose acquaintance, with that of Mrs. Tyndall, we had the pleasure of making, very kindly insisted upon wrapping me up in his travelling plaidie, which I sent back to him by one of the porters who carried me down the mountain. On the way, Mr. Scott walked by the side of my chair-bearers and was telling me of an accident which once befell Palgrave Simpson, who fell and injured his foot, in the very descent which we were making. Directly afterwards we heard shouts and cries lower down the steep, stony path, and sent on one of our porters to ascertain what was the matter. It transpired that Arthur Cecil, who had gone on in advance, had fallen and sprained his foot badly, being led by a man on each side of him into Brigue. It seemed so strange that this should have happened just at the moment when I was listening to the account of another accident in a similar way, and on the same mountain ! I shall write again soon.—Ever affectionately,

"M. E. B."

A Modern Mrs. Malaprop.

During one of our Brighton visits we took part of a house on the King's Road, where there was a very remarkable young person engaged as upper-housemaid, who had the wonderful gift of twisting the Queen's English about in such a manner that it was at times more than difficult to understand her meaning. I don't think she knew herself what the words she tried to pronounce meant, but it was her evident delight to give utterance to the most extraordinary gibberish I ever listened to. She was a veritable Mrs. Malaprop from a housemaid's point of view. I accidentally from my dressing-room overheard conversations between her and a fellow-servant, and if the door was partly open, I confess I was so attracted by her wonderful power of word-twisting that I did not shut it. She assumed a kind of mincing way of speaking, and I took down in pencil all the wonderful things she said. In the following conversation I reproduce them in their integrity :—

ANNE: "Where does your parents live then?"

JANE: "They used to reside in 'Ighgate (put that picture straight, it 'esitates me), but my mother found the air of 'Ighgate too strong for her, and when she took ill the doctor said she must move to a more atmospheric place. My poor mother had a bad time with my father. He was a cruel 'usband, and behaved to her like a medicated scoundrel."

ANNE: "Well, I never!"

JANE: "He was her second 'usband, you know, and we never liked him. My poor dear father died five years

ago. His sufferings were awful; he had a couple of ulsters in his inside."

ANNE "What, *two* of 'em?"

JANE: "Yes. So he died."

ANNE: "I should think he did."

JANE: "We didn't wish mother to re-wed, and we up and told her one day that if she did we would go out of the 'ouse, as any second husband we should look upon as an antelope."

ANNE: "Why, of course."

JANE: "Well, she did marry again, and he was a punishment to her, for he was always ill and complaining. Mother was nothing but a nurse. First he had an illustrated sore throat, and was awful bad when the influential gales was blowin'; but he died of 'aricot veins in his legs, a year ago, I am happy to say, for he 'ated us, and we 'ated him. He gave himself such airs and got that '*auughty* that at last he arrived at such a perrogative he couldn't consume it!"

Another specimen of our mother tongue I heard one day between two men of the working classes.

1ST: "What I says I says, and what I does I does, and that's what I call a-doin' of my bestest, and I can't do no betterer."

2ND: "I don't see 'ow you could do no otherer."

A Little Waif.

I frequently spent my early morning in studying a new part, going down to the beach and sitting on a bench

there in a quiet spot. One day I found myself quite alone for some time, when, presently, I observed two ragged little girls playing amongst the shingle. They were not near enough to disturb me, so I made no attempt to move. By-and-by, however, one of them, who had been staring at me from a little distance, became more interested in my occupation, and gradually ventured nearer. She stood gazing at me for some time, which made me feel fidgety, and I was just on the point of telling the child to run away, when, after a snuffle (for I presume pocket-handkerchiefs were at a premium with her), she started a conversation. Her costume was limited to a poor ragged frock over nothing at all, neither shoes nor stockings, long lank hair, and an old straw-hat with the torn crown hanging on one side of a very dirty face. She stood with her hands behind her, and commenced :

CHILD : "Are you readin', loidy?" (snuffle).

SELF : "Why, of course; can't you see, child?"

CHILD : "What are you a-readin' of?"

SELF : "A book."

CHILD : "Is it a *noice* book? Is there fairies wot gives you things?"

SELF : "What things?"

CHILD : "Puddens and coikes!" (a big snuffle).

SELF : "No, nothing of that sort."

CHILD : "Then wot's the good o' readin' of it?" (The child comes near and seats herself by my side, swinging her legs to and fro. After a pause, and a good stare)—

CHILD : "Are you a pretty loidy?"

SELF (inclined for a joke) : "I am considered the beauty of Brighton."

CHILD (after a long look) : "Oh! I don't think so."

SELF : "I'm sorry for that."

CHILD (still swinging her legs) : "I like your 'at."

SELF: "I'm glad you like something."

CHILD: "My mother 'as one jist loike it."

SELF: "Really?"

CHILD: "Yes; she bought it for a shillin' in 'Igh Street."

The frankness of the remarks greatly amused me. Suddenly the girl made a move to go, saying, "Good-bye, loidy," when I remarked, "You are going home to dinner, I suppose?" She shook her lank hair, and replied in the same artless manner: "No; I ain't got no dinner; never 'ave no dinner, 'cept on Sundays." I began to get interested in the poor little waif, and inquired further: "No dinner except on Sundays?"

CHILD: "No, loidy."

SELF: "A good tea, I dare say?"

CHILD: "Only dry bread. Mother can't give us no butter."

SELF: "If I gave you a penny, what would you do with it?"

CHILD (with a look, not being able to realize the possibility of such a gift): "I would buy a bun" (a loud and prolonged snuffle).

I gave the child money, and she rapidly disappeared in the direction of the shops. Coming hurriedly back, she seated herself on the beach by the side of her ragged playmate, with whom she shared her bun; I was touched by the instinct to divide her treasure with her poor companion. The child had some dinner, and we became very good friends in the future.

Street Swindles.

I am, like others, frequently accosted in the streets by professional beggars, and often I cannot resist the temptation of indulging in a little cross-examination, more especially when I have reason to believe that the mendicant is a sham. One day I was walking with a friend, when a boy, whose begrimed face wore the imploring expression which is so common amongst street beggars, and which gives them all a certain resemblance, addressed me without any hesitation (his speech naturally having had a very long run) : "Please, mum, a halfpenny, mum. So 'ungree, mum. Ain't 'ad nothink to heat since yesterday mornin', mum. Do, mum; I'm a poor horfun, mum." "Poor boy! An orphan?" "Yes, mum." "Dear me! Where do your father and mother live?" "In Queen Street, mum!" (*Exit.*)

During another walk I was addressed by a humble but apparently respectable woman, who, I must confess, succeeded in completely taking me in, for she did not ask for alms. She was a Frenchwoman, and spoke to me in her native tongue: "Madame, veuillez m'indiquer la route pour Finsbury Square?" I directed her as well as I could, seeing that we were standing in Portland Place; and as she left me she gave a piteous sigh and walked slowly along. It occurred to me that she possibly was trying to get to some friends, and had not the means to take omnibus or cab, so I offered her some money, which, after well-acted surprise, she accepted with a profusion of thanks. Six weeks afterwards I met the woman again, but not recognizing *me*, she asked the same question, to which I replied, to her evident confusion, "Comment! Vous ne l'avez pas encore trouvè?"

“Muffins!”

One more story of mendicity, and I will leave my indigent friends to play out their dramas undisturbed by me. This is an incident quite opposite in character, one of those sad cases which touch the heart very deeply; but, painful as it is, there is a tinge of serio-comic in the tale at which, while sympathizing with the cause, one cannot resist a smile. A lady of culture, reduced to the last stage of penury, and driven by hopeless despair to beggary, having tried everything in the shape of work to keep body and soul together, was, at last, forced by cruel fortune to a state bordering on distraction; she cared not for herself, but her baby boy cried for food, and something must be done. Being at her wits' end, she conceived the idea of going round to the various houses in the hope of selling muffins; she hid her face as best she could, and, under the shelter of a dark night, started on her weary errand. The poor lady wandered from street to street, stopping to gaze down at the kitchen windows, but could not for the life of her summon up courage to ring the muffin-bell. At length, made desperate by the remembrance of her baby boy, she *did* gently ring it, whispering feebly over an area gate, “*Muffins!*” The very sound of the bell and of her own voice frightened her, and she clung to the railings, muttering under her breath, “Merciful Heaven! I hope they didn't hear it!”

When her little son grows up to manhood, may his devotion to his mother repay her for the indignity she suffered for his sake!

During one of my visits to sweet, peaceful, health-giving Westgate-on-Sea, I overheard the following conversation between two girls who had walked over from Margate :—

1ST GIRL: "My *heye* ! Ain't it quiet ? "

2ND GIRL: " Well, of all the dull 'oles ! "

1ST GIRL: " But it's a pretty *Poice*."

2ND GIRL: " So is a *Cemetery* ! "

The stillness and calm of the little place, and the absence of niggers depressed them, so they quickly returned to their beloved Margate.

How tastes differ ! I love Westgate because it is quiet, and the St. Mildred's Hotel is more like home than any I have ever stayed at in England. Others like Margate and 'Arry !

Letter from James Anderson.

Spontaneous criticisms from fellow-workers are always delightful, as was this kind of expression from a veteran tragedian :—

"Garrick Club, May 3, 1877.

"DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,

"Pray do me the favour to accept an old actor's warmest felicitations on your beautiful rendering of the parson's wife in *The Vicarage*. A more perfect bit of quiet acting I have never witnessed. You must believe me sincere when I tell you it moved me even to tears—the delicate harmony of comedy and pathos awakened me to surprise and admiration. Having gratified my love for legitimate acting so much, you will not, I trust, refuse to accept the sincere and appreciative thanks of—Yours very faithfully,

"JAMES ANDERSON,"

A Visit to Homburg.

During our stay at Homburg, the Prince of Wales, always among the most punctual at the favoured spring, took many opportunities to be gracious, and the late Duke and the Duchess of Albany honoured us one evening with an invitation to their villa, when Mrs. Bancroft added her signature to his Royal Highness's remarkable book of autographs, in which I had already had the honour to write my name on an occasion when I passed a day at Claremont, at the invitation of the Prince, from whom a few days afterwards I received this letter:—

“Osborne, April 12, 1881.

“DEAR MR. BANCROFT,

“Pray accept my best thanks for the photograph of Mrs. Bancroft, which I think excellent, also for your own as ‘Triplet.’ I shall value them very much. With kind regards to Mrs. Bancroft, believe me, yours very truly,

“LEOPOLD.”

A Matrimonial Contrast.

As soon as I got on board the boat for Calais, feeling a breeze, I asked the usual question, “What sort of a crossing shall we have?” On being informed, “Oh, a beautiful crossing; a bit ‘lumpy,’ perhaps, mum, after yesterday’s storm,” all those poor creatures (I am one of them) who suffer more or less from *mal de mer*,

immediately prepared themselves for a private cabin, or a couch in the Chamber of Horrors, otherwise the ladies' saloon. Of course I was assured that the fresh air was safer for me ; but as all the cabins were taken, I urged that, much as I disliked it, I would go downstairs, "for," I added, "I do not look my best when I'm ill." We had noticed, when we embarked, a very pretty girl with a tall, good-looking man, who was most attentive to her, watching her affectionately, like a faithful dog. We remarked aside, "A newly-married couple!" The bride was conscious of being observed, for many eyes were gazing at her ; she seemed abashed, and almost inclined to apologize for getting married. I had secured my couch, and was resigned to a "lumpy crossing," for we had no sooner started than the boat began to roll and pitch, and I felt thankful that I had wisely prepared for the worst. Presently down came the little bride, followed by her young husband, who anxiously asked the stewardess if "his wife" could have a couch. "Certainly," was the reply, as she pointed to one on the opposite side to mine. The bride sat down, and the husband cheered her with assurances that she would not be ill. "Now, dearest pet, make up your mind that you are *not* going to be ill, and you *won't*. Your Regy will run down every now and then to have a peep at you." Then, turning to the stewardess, he said, "Kindly look after 'my wife,' won't you ?" "Certainly, *sir*." After a little whispering close enough to the ear to slyly kiss it, and a pause on the steps to throw a long, tender glance at "his wife" before leaving her, he went away. In a few moments the newly-made wife called the stewardess, and asked whether she might occupy a couch she saw vacant on my side of the saloon, which she thought preferable to her own. She was conducted to it, at once closed her eyes, and prepared for

sleep. Soon afterwards a middle-aged lady, and somewhat plain, came down. She was shown to the sofa just vacated by the bride, and lay down immediately, covering herself with a travelling-cloak which chanced to be similar to that worn by the other lady. In about half an hour the bridegroom crept carefully down the steps, as if he had no right there, to have a peep at his brand-new wife. Seeing that all was tranquil and the stewardess idle, he retired noiselessly. The middle-aged lady had turned her face to the wall, and was asleep. By-and-by "Regy" returned, and ventured closer to the couch. He sat down, and said in the softest tone, "Is my pet one all right? She *has* been a brave girl indeed! We shall soon be there, darling. Courage, little one! your *husband* is here!" Then he took out of a lovely new travelling-bag a bottle of eau-de-Cologne and sprinkled her wrap with it, filling the close atmosphere with delicious perfume, at the same time saying encouragingly, "Soon there now, dearie—soon there now. Who said she would be ill? Brave little wife! and who loves his little girl, eh?" Then more eau-de-Cologne, some of which must have gone into the poor lady's eyes, for she woke with a start and sat bolt upright. When "Regy" saw her face, he dropped the bottle and bolted up the steps as fast as he could run, stumbling over the brass-bound edges of them on his way. (I would have given worlds to have laughed outright, but I dared not move—I was not good sailor enough!) A sudden cessation of the ship's bad behaviour told us we were near the end of our journey, and the ladies began to make a move to collect their things.

The bewildered young husband ventured cautiously down again, looking anxiously about for his wife, and seeing her seated on the opposite side, went over to her, but not without casting an abashed and uneasy glance at

the middle-aged lady. I heard an explanation going on between the just-wedded pair, and the young bride crossed to where the other poor lady was sitting to recover her eau-de-Cologne. She apologized for her husband's behaviour, upon which the middle-aged lady remarked, "Oh, not at all, not at all! I was asleep until your husband spoke, but when I heard his words, I knew it was a mistake, for it is many years since my husband has spoken like that to me." There was pathos in this.

When we got on deck, we found ourselves in harbour. We were much crowded, and while waiting at the gangway I heard the young husband say in an undertone, "Was my pretty flower ill? Did the little wifie suffer at all?" At the same moment the gruff, brusque, harsh voice of the other lady's husband said in a loud tone, "Were you sick, Eliza?" During our journey these new-and old-married couples must have fraternized, for when we got out at Brussels we saw them, all four, dining together. Afterwards the two ladies went for a little stroll in the town, having still time at their disposal. They lingered too long, however, and the husbands became, one extremely anxious, and the other wild with impatience; the one in terror of "anything having happened to the darling wifie," the other stamping with rage and muttering, "Oh, these women and their infernal shops!" Presently there was a general commotion, and travellers were taking their seats—still no sign of the two ladies. The husbands rushed up and down the platform, asking everybody if the wives had been seen. "En voiture!" cried the guard. Where on earth can they be? At length the ladies appeared in the distance running like mad. The bells rang, the engine whistled, and all was bustle and confusion. The bridegroom assisted his young wife tenderly into the carriage, saying, "Oh, my angel!

where were you?" The older married man eagerly exclaimed, as he hoisted his middle-aged wife up the steps with a tremendous push, sending her parcels flying before her, "Where the devil have you been, Eliza?"

Our Visit to the Salt Mines near Salzburg. A Comic Episode.

"Tuesday, September, 1877,

"Hôtel de l'Europe, Salzburg.

"MY DEAR —,

"We have been very like children during this holiday trip, so keen was our desire to see everything and to do everything. When we were told it was usual for visitors to pass under a waterfall, never mind the wetting, we must do it. We drove with the — to Berchtesgaden, and went with them down the shaft some hundreds of feet below the earth, the sensation being as if we were sent flying to the lower regions, which were represented by the salt-mines. After we had crossed a black, silent lake, the border of which was feebly lit by faint glimmering oil-lamps, we mounted on a kind of wooden plank on wheels at the mouth of a long black tunnel, with a small bright star at the other end, which we were told was daylight, and through which we should pass into our own civilized world again. The ceremony we had to go through, and the costumes we were obliged to don, before we could be admitted into the bowels of the earth caused me much amusement (for the ludicrous side of things, if there is one at all, I am sure to detect). We were shown into separate apartments, where attendants were waiting to dress us. Our costumes were as follows: For the men, a suit of white linen over their own, a felt hat, and a

leathern apron, only not worn as one, as there were many shafts to descend quickly in a sitting position !

“The ladies wore a white linen jacket, very full trousers, to allow one’s own dress to be tucked inside ; a leather belt and small felt hat, with no brim, of saucepan shape. These linen suits are worn to prevent the salt from penetrating through one’s clothes. This is all right enough when the lady’s figure is slight, but when it happens to be somewhat corpulent, the effect under these circumstances is too comic. When we all emerged to cross the road in open daylight, for the purpose of entering the mouth of the pit, a lady, whose dimensions were, to say the least, bulky, made her appearance. The effect on me was instantaneous, and I laughed till I suffered positive pain. I was obliged to make her think that I was amused at the general effect, and not at her in particular, or the explanation might have been a little unpleasant. But every time my eyes met her large presence I could not resist laughing. While we were in the dark cavern of the earth, lit only by the dim lanterns which were carried by our guides, I, of course, was unable to see her distinctly, but I always knew when she was near, and could picture her in ‘my mind’s eye.’ When we emerged again into daylight (covered thickly with salt —in fact, human beings well pickled), this female Falstaff met my gaze once more, and I went off again into such an ungovernable fit of laughter that I was pushed into my dressing-room, where I could give vent to it to my heart’s content. I enclose a rough sketch of the lady’s appearance.

“I shall write again from Paris.—Yours ever,

“M. E. B.”

Choice Letters.

Although our company comprised a strong list of names, we had further opportunities of adding to it, as the following amusing applications will show:—

“HONNERED LADY,—

“i was borne in allen Street and i am now pottman at the swan with 2 neks i have no art to continue in my persision so i writ to arsk you to putt me on the bords of your theater i am a borne actor for I citch myself making speaches out of plays in the middel of the nite if you will give me the charnce I will do my duty well and be a creditt to your theater if you see your way to give me the charnce i must arsk you to say nothink of it to my family yours truly humble servent—

“HENRY ——.”

“to Mr. Bangkroft—

“DEAR SIR,—

“could you be so kind as to teake noites of Ellen ——’s letter wich i took the libty of writing asking you if you could for kindly infrom har How she Could become a Balled gril as i have a longing disire to become one hopeing you will excuse the libty of troubilleng you i remaine your obedient Servent

“ELLEN ——.

“wery tall age 19.”

“ DEAR LADY,—

“ I hope you will pardon me for troubling you but if ‘you’ will kindly read what ‘I’ have got to say; you will perhaps, think, that I am justified in writing. I am twenty-two years of age, and have been for a considerable time studying for the stage. I am not merely stage struck; but possess those qualifications which must inevitably raise me to its highest ‘step’; which is ‘that’ of expressing extreme passion. I have applied to several theatre’s but all in vain. But I sincerely hope that you will not follow their example, and ‘also’ help to rescue me from the poverty and insult to which I have been exposed these last few year’s. I have not been accustomed to an audience, therefore I should like a few subordinate character’s till I regain confidence, once more I ask you kindly to do what I ask and you will be repaid in a manner you little dream of.—I am yours

“ JOHN ——.”

—
“ SIR,—

“ Pleese pardon me for taking the liberty but it is on account of myself wishing to be an Actress I feel I never shall be happy until I am one and I can assure you I will not be long lerning what I have to lern. I can jump about, but I am only just beginning to lern dancing, they tell me I am like a frog jumping about I am 17 years old and big for my age when I was 15 I played with other girls at pretending to be circus girls I can sing pretty well this writing look something dreadful but I am writing it at work and I am in a hurry your Resply—

“ ETHEL ——.”

“ SIR,—

“ I am a young man age 20 my hight is 5ft. 7 in. light weight (Excuse the term please) very good looking and Nimble should like to get into your theatre I have a good strong Voice and a distinct plain and good pronyunciation Quick at learning parts I will Agree to any proposition you make I have friends of position in various parts of England shall do my best to please you all I ask in Return is to have an allowance just for the necessaries and would like to live on premises but be content with a Small room in the vicinity. I beg the honour of Being yours

“ obediently

“ MR. FRANK ——.

“ My dear sir I am of Course single do not Smoke or drink.”

“ DEER SIR,—

“ I have a grate desire to become An actorist I have not Been on the stage before but ive allways wished to become one I have Nither Father nor Mother I have too brothers that all the frends i have so I am in the world allone So if you or any one would take me I should be extreamly thankfull i have been in sirvice but its no good its seems if ive been made for the stage its allways in my hed and I am sure I would soon be a good actorist I went to the Princess and the dorr Keeper He told me to write to any of the mangers Sir i am not a Londer but yorkshire Girl i was 16 years old Last febuary

“ I remain yours Respetfully M—— N——

“ — hamstedd Road N.V.”

Mr. Jefferson.

Mr. Jefferson, who, had he not been so distinguished as an actor, might easily have made painting his profession—his pictures having been more than once shown in the Academy—gave us a charming souvenir from his brush of some happy days we had passed together, chiefly on the river, and often in the additional companionship of William Winter, an accomplished poet and critic, and also a fellow-countryman of his. The subject is a back-water on the Thames in the early haze—the *genre* being greatly that of the eminent French landscape painter, Corot.

Jefferson had lingered in the old country long after his engagements here were over, for he loved England and its people, and now was going home. The following letter was an answer to a wish that he would add, if possible, to the value we set upon his gift by writing his name on the canvas, which is quite important in size, although so modestly spoken of by himself:—

“ Brighton, Thursday, September 27, 1877.

“ MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—

“ I was sorry to find yourself and Bancroft from home when I called on Monday with the little sketch of the Thames. I am glad you like it.

“ Many thanks for your kind and beautiful letter. I shall be in London on Sunday, and will call for the purpose of wishing you both good-bye, and to sign the picture as you request.

“ Mrs. Jefferson joins me in love to you both, and we

hope some day to see you in America.—Always your friend and admirer,

“J. JEFFERSON.”

No man was ever more gifted with a poetic temperament than Jefferson. He loved nature. To linger on an old bridge, or wander in a country lane, would give him hours of happiness. Every leaf had its charm in his eyes, each blade of grass he would, as it were, photograph on his memory, parting with them regretfully, so “loving-jealous” was he of their beauties. Once, after a long ramble near Cookham, he said, “What a beautiful place is your bonnie England! How I should like to take it in my arms and carry it right away!” He was as popular in society as on the stage, and always charming in companionship.

A little story he told us of periodical visits to a certain theatre in his own country, either by himself or with some other distinguished actor, we thought very touching in its simplicity. At this theatre the actor had for years taken some friendly notice of an old stage carpenter and scene-shifter named Jackson, whose life had interested him, and always got some substantial recognition when the engagement ended. This went on for years, when, on one occasion, the kind comedian looked about for the old man in vain. He searched the theatre well, but could not find him; so at last he sent for the master-carpenter, and asked him where Jackson was. The man first answered the question with a sorrowful look, then simply pointing upwards, said quietly, “I guess he’s *shifting clouds.*”

It is impossible to recall more exquisite acting than Jefferson’s in the character of dear, dissolute, gentle Rip Van Winkle. When this finished work of art first caused its sensation at the Adelphi, a solemn-looking man who

was seated in the upper boxes read from his play-bill in an audible voice, "Twenty years will elapse between the acts." He then rose, took up his hat, and, bowing to his neighbour, said quietly, "Sir, I wish you good-evening. Few present, I take it, will survive to see the end of this play."

I wonder if America will lend its great artist to us again. We hope so, for few friendships are more valued by us than that of Joseph Jefferson.

"Hullabaloo! that's Right!"

On our journey from Charing Cross to Dover, we had one more passenger in our compartment in the person of an elderly maiden lady, a native of the Emerald Isle, as we soon discovered. By her side was a big cage covered with a green baize cap. We were soon made aware that a parrot was inside by a remark every now and then, in a broad Irish brogue, from underneath the aforesaid green baize: "Hullabaloo! that's roight!" This speech from the parrot, which it had evidently been taught in the kitchen, greatly annoyed its mistress, who, every time it was uttered, retaliated by giving the cage a bang. The proceeding seemed so usual that the bird considered it as part of the performance, and was often only encouraged to repeat the observation. The old lady exhibited much anxiety about the probable state of the Channel, and kept asking questions of me as to what I (M. E. B.) thought it would be like; and as I answered her, she would reply, in powerful Irish, with the same question in other words, thus: "Are ye a good sailor?" "Not at all." "Ye're

not?” “No.” “Ain’t ye?” “Do you think it’ll be calm?” “I think so.” “Ye do?” “Yes.” “Do yer?” The parrot interrupting every now and then from under the covering, “Hullabaloo! that’s roight!” “You think it’ll be loike a lake?” “I really am sure it will be calm.” “Ye are?” “Yes.” “Are ye?” Parrot, “Hullabaloo! that’s roight!”

When we were on board, it turned out to be a little rougher than we expected. The Irish lady was seated on a chair with the cage close to her, and at every heave of the boat the poor thing gave indications that she was *not* a good sailor; the hidden parrot, at each evidence of her sufferings, and much to her annoyance, exclaimed loudly, “Hullabaloo! that’s roight!”

Letters from Fanny Kemble, Pierre Berton, and Wilkie Collins.

From FANNY KEMBLE.

“15, Connaught Square, April 7, 1878.

“MY DEAR MADAM,—

“My nephew tells me that you have expressed a desire to possess my ugly and illegible handwriting. Here it is! and I venture to avail myself of this opportunity of expressing how much I have enjoyed repeatedly the clever and admirably acted piece which is now succeeding so brilliantly at your theatre. ‘Old folks’ are hard to please, and it is a good action to give them pleasure, and so I hope you will allow me to subscribe myself, my dear madam, your obliged servant,

“To Mrs. Bancroft.” “FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE.

From PIERRE BERTON.

“St. Valery-en-Caux, *Lundi, July, 1878.*
“Seine Infre.

“**MO CHER MONSIEUR BANCROFT,**—

“Hier j'ai fait part à Sardou du grand plaisir que j'avais eu à voir représenter *Diplomacy*, et je lui raconté dans le plus grand détail l'excellente soirée que j'ai passée dans votre théâtre.

“Il sera très heureux de vous recevoir, ainsi que Madame Bancroft, lors de votre passage à Paris et me charge de vous le dire. Si donc vous voulez bien me prévenir un peu d'avance à l'époque de votre retour de Suisse je me ferai un véritable plaisir de vous mettre l'un et l'autre en relations directes.

“Permettez-moi de vous remercier encore de l'accueil cordial que vous avez bien voulu me faire, et croyez-moi, je vous prie.—Votre bien dévoué,

“PIERRE BERTON.”

From WILKIE COLLINS.

“90, Gloucester Place, Portman Square, W.,
“January 13, 1878.

“**MY DEAR BANCROFT,**—

“I went to the theatre with rheumatism in my back and in my knees, and I was (I need not say how unwillingly) obliged to get home to bed after seeing the first two acts of the piece only, but I saw enough to justify me in sincerely congratulating you and Mrs. Bancroft.

“You have won a great success, and you have most

thoroughly deserved it. I have never seen you do anything on the stage in such a thoroughly masterly manner as the performance of your part in the great scene. Your Triplet was an admirable piece of acting, most pathetic and true, but the Russian (a far more difficult part to play) has beaten the Triplet.

“There was no mistaking the applause that broke out when you left the scene. You had seized the sympathies of the audience.

“Of the great success of the English *Dora* there is no manner of doubt, and I heartily rejoice in it.—Yours always truly,

“WILKIE COLLINS.”

The Stammering Tenor.

We passed a delightful month in the Engadine, where we had the happiness to become acquainted with the late Madame Goldschmidt, who, as Jenny Lind, had held the proudest place in public affection and regard. We then had many cheery chats over early experiences, and many a laugh too; now we deeply deplore the sad affliction which recently befell those who loved her.

Mrs. Bancroft was indebted to Madame Goldschmidt for the following anecdote:—

The incident occurred during one of the provincial tours of the great “Swedish Nightingale” and her operatic company. The tenor of the troupe stammered so painfully, that it was often very difficult to follow him, or to even guess his meaning, although when he sang not a trace of his affliction could be observed.

One day they were about to start by train from one town for the next place on their list, and where they had to appear on the same evening. They were all, except the tenor, seated in the railway carriage, when suddenly the afflicted member of the company discovered, on looking into the luggage-van, that a certain black box, which carried the important part of their wardrobe, had been left behind. The train was on the point of starting, as the tenor, in a terrible state of excitement and anxiety, rushed up to the carriage where the others were seated, and stammered out—

TENOR : “The b—b—b—”

BARITONE : “What’s the matter ?”

TENOR : “The b—b—b—”

BASSO : “What is it, my dear fellow—what is it ?”

TENOR : “The bl—bl—bl—bl—”

BARITONE : “Sing it, man, sing it, for mercy’s sake !”

TENOR (*in recitative*) : “All, I fear, is lost !”

BASSO (*shouting*) : “What’s lost ?”

TENOR : “I fe—ar—is lost !”

BARITONE (*getting nervous*) : “What do you mean, man ? Go on !”

TENOR : “The black box !”

BASSO : “Yes—yes !”

TENOR : “The black box !”

BARITONE : “What of it, man—what of it ?”

TENOR : “The black box has been for—got—t—en !”

ALL THE COMPANY (*jumping out*) : “Oh, my goodness ! we shall have no clothes !”

Jenny Lind in the Engadine.

A little incident connected with Madame Goldschmidt's visit to the Engadine caused great amusement to her, and immense gratification to another. One morning, quite early, Madame took advantage of the hotel visitors not being about, when, slipping into the drawing-room unobserved by any one, she sat down to the piano and began to warble forth some exquisite music. The doctor of the village, who, of course, was an early riser, and busy paying his first professional visits, happened to be passing the door of the room at the time, and was at once attracted by her singing. He stopped, looked through the glass door, and, seeing who was there, could not resist turning the handle very softly, and entering the room without a sound. He sat behind a screen and "feasted," as he termed it, upon this accidental banquet of sweet voice-notes. He had never heard the great songstress in his life, and could not resist the temptation which offered itself to him. Madame Goldschmidt's back was turned in his direction, so that she could not see him, and for a short time unconsciously afforded the doctor a pleasure he said he should never forget. She was beginning afresh, when suddenly the door (which he had left slightly ajar, fearing to disturb her) creaked loudly; she turned round, and seeing that she was not alone, closed the piano and left the room. The doctor felt sorry to have been the cause of her annoyance, but at the risk of even losing all his patients through keeping them waiting, said he could not help it.

Madame Goldschmidt was much amused when told of this adventure, and had she known who it was, would,

doubtless, have pretended not to have seen the intruder, but have allowed him to continue his delightful dream. Dr. Ludwig vowed vengeance on the creaking door for a long time afterwards.

Here is a letter received later on from this gifted and regretted lady :—

“1, Moreton Gardens, South Kensington,
“November 15.

“DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—

“I am sorry to hear that your head still troubles you. I hope time and calmness will come to your help ; stage-work is so apt to disturb the *head*—the hurry, the anxiety one always is in on the ‘planks’ (as we call the stage in my old country), makes the head to quiver and the sensitive nerves to quake.

“It is very kind of you to offer us a box, only, as you *always* can sell yours, it is rather a hard task to ask you to become a loser by us.

“But your kind offer, sincere as I know it is, has been fully appreciated by us.

“My young soldier is going to—*Sheffield* ; and I *love* Sheffield just now (never did *before*), as India or the Cape would have been too trying to him, as he has *not* been right.—Believe me, dear Mrs. Bancroft, yours sincerely,

“JENNY LIND GOLDSCHMIDT.”

Lost on a Mountain.

During this visit, and for the benefit of the *Verschönerungsverein* ! or Paths and Ways Improvement Society (of which we both hold diplomas as the only foreign members), I repeated my reading of the death of Jo, from *Bleak House* ; the result was very gratifying. One path was made up what is called the Little Mutoas, which is

now a walk of about an hour and a half to the summit; but, of course, it took much longer some years ago, when an old lover of the Engadine and hardy climber, Sir Paul Hunter, strayed there one afternoon to read. Becoming engrossed in his newspapers, the time flew by; he found, when he began to retrace his steps, that the night was already falling, and soon he lost his way. Knowing that the descent would grow more and more dangerous, he wisely returned to the summit, and made efforts to attract attention, either from some stray shepherd on the mountain, or from people in the valley far below. Shouts were soon found to be of no avail, but placing newspapers, one by one, on the end of his alpen-stock, he set fire to them, and by this means made his plight known. He was answered from the village by a return fire that his signals had been seen, and then, with the companionship of his pipe, waited patiently for the rescue he now felt sure would save him from being benighted.

The news soon spread that guides had gone up the mountain to bring some one down in safety who had lost his way, and had been making signals of distress. Lady Hunter, being among the visitors who heard all this, began to wonder what could have detained her husband. Meanwhile Sir Paul was found and guided down in safety. It being now nearly dark, with great discretion he dismissed the guides as he neared the village, and sauntered to his hotel as if nothing had been amiss, passing unobserved through the little crowd which was waiting anxiously to learn who it was the men had been sent in search of. As he, with complete *sang froid*, arrived at the hotel, Lady Hunter ran towards him, saying, "Oh, Paul, I am so glad to see you back! where have you been? Some silly old fool has lost himself on one of the mountains, and *I feared it might be you!*"

A Royal Breakfast.

Breakfasting one morning at Champeaux, with the odd shingly floor and the trees reaching to its glass roof, in the Place de la Bourse, we were victims of a harmless practical joke, which we afterwards heartily enjoyed, indulged in at our expense by a humorous friend who had seen us enter the restaurant, where, presently, to our amazement, our little party became the object of extraordinary attention and curiosity. Nothing seemed to be thought good enough for us, the bowing and scraping increased with each course, no end of little *politesses* were pressed upon us, humble waiters left our table to the control of more gorgeous persons, and the proprietors—or those in authority—attended to our wants themselves. We wondered what it could mean! we saw no other English people in the room, and felt it to be unlikely, almost impossible, that we were recognized, which might otherwise have accounted for part of the curiosity, and for *some* of the attention. Scattered groups of remaining visitors whispered together, and gazed at us in a marked and interested way. When, at last, our bill was brought, it certainly seemed a little extravagant; but as nothing compared to the ceremonial with which our coats and cloaks were given to us. The whole staff and their relatives—uncles, cousins, aunts—seemed to be assembled to see our modest departure. People rose from their seats and bowed humbly. Why? We had been pointed out, as we learnt, when we gained the street, to the *restaurateur* as members of the English royal family, travelling *incog.* to see the Exhibition quietly! We certainly discovered that we had breakfasted *en Prince*.

“Yours, Virginius; Yours.”

Hero is a small anecdote of Phelps to tell when he was playing Virginius in the old Sadler's Wells days. It happened on one occasion that the “super-master,” who acts as the leader of crowds, had met with an accident, and could not therefore fulfil his duties as First Citizen in the forum scene, where Appius Claudius claims Virginia from her father. So the little part which leads the chorus of voices was given to the man who was second in command. As the time grew near he became very anxious and nervous, although the stage-manager had gone through the words with him several times. The scene in the tragedy where Virginius appeals to the crowd for their support against the demand of the tyrant Appius Claudius is as follows :

VIRGINIUS: “Friends and citizens, your hands, your hands—”

CROWD: “They are yours, Virginius; they are yours.”

VIRGINIUS: “If ye have wives—if ye have children—”

CROWD: “We have, Virginius; we have!”

But the poor nervous man, in his fright, put the cart before the horse, and the dialogue ran thus :

VIRGINIUS: “Your hands, your hands—”

CITIZEN: “We have, Virginius; we have!”

VIRGINIUS: “If ye have wives—if ye have children—”

CITIZEN: “They are yours, Virginius; they are yours!”

John Clarke and Toole.

An anecdote of our old friend and comrade, John Clarke, who for a long time had been ill from the same scourge—consumption—which carried off his former rival, James Rogers.

Clarke, as the reader has been already told, dearly loved praise, and this pardonable weakness was well known to his comrades, who delighted in teasing him now and again by lauding some other actor in his own line. This so irritated Clarke that he would always quickly change the subject. One night he and some others—Toole was one of them—after supping together at a club, were driving in a cab in the direction of Clarke's house, as all the party lived in that neighbourhood. Toole determined upon getting Clarke to invite them in for a chat, that he might play upon his weakness, so began to carry out the scheme in this way.

TOOLE: "We'll come in if you'll ask us, Clarke."

CLARKE: "No, Johnny; not to-night. I must get to bed now, as I have an early rehearsal. So I'll say good-night."

TOOLE: "Well, I'm sorry. I wanted to tell you the wonderful criticism I heard yesterday on your acting as Tom Dibbles; it must have been a fine performance."

CLARKE (*pleased*): "Oh—well, I hope I made a success. But—a—"

TOOLE: "I wish I could have seen it."

CLARKE: "It's not so late as I thought. Will you come in for a few minutes?" (*They entered the house.*)

TOOLE: "Didn't Rogers play the part once at the Strand?"

CLARKE: (*uneasily*): "Y—e—s."

TOOLE: "Clever fellow, Rogers! I suppose you saw him in it?" (*sitting down.*)

CLARKE: "Look here, old fellow, you'd better not sit down, for I can't let you stay long."

TOOLE: "But I don't think Rogers could have been suited to the part somehow."

CLARKE: "Will you have a cigar? Ah I forgot, you don't smoke; but have some whisky?"

TOOLE: "No, thanks" (*getting up*). "I don't think Jimmy was to be mentioned in the same breath with you, Clarke, as a character actor."

CLARKE (*flattered*): "Oh—well—a—all well enough in certain parts, you know—too fond of applause, perhaps. Do have some whisky; it's not half-past one, and do sit down." (*After a pause.*)

TOOLE: "But everybody agrees that Buckstone was inimitable when he first played Tom Dibbles. I suppose you often saw him?"

CLARKE: "Well, I must bundle you off, my boy; I'm rather tired. I'll let you out myself. Good-night."

TOOLE (*preparing to go*): "When you played in *Box and Cox* with George Honey you got the most applause, I always heard."

CLARKE: "Ha, ha! Yes, I did; I did."

TOOLE: "Some one told me George was somehow 'out of it' altogether."

CLARKE: "Yes, I think he was. Do come and sit up near the fire. I like a chat when work is over."

TOOLE: "I think it rather hard on you, though, when they will have it that you were a little heavy."

CLARKE: "Oh, they say that, do they? Well, it's just upon two; you really must be off. I'll see you out."

TOOLE (*buttoning up his coat*): "Were you a bit heavy, Clarke?"

CLARKE (*shutting the door with a bang*): "Good-night."

Sitting to Count Gleichen.

Count Gleichen (H.S.H. Prince Victor of Hohenlohe) accepted a commission for our busts. Many a pleasant morning was passed in this way in the studio built in the garden of St. James's Palace.

One day Prince Leiningen came in, and for some time watched the proceedings. Suddenly we observed that he was smiling, and asked the reason. He replied, "I don't know how it is, but the more serious Mrs. Bancroft tries to look, the more desirous I am to laugh, as there always seems to be a smile waiting to burst forth, and the eyes seem all the time to be dying to laugh, which, you know, is very infectious." The Prince's remark, we fear, somewhat interfered with that day's sitting.

An Eccentric Servant.

An eccentric man, who had been employed as a dresser in the theatre, we took with us to Broadstairs as an indoor-servant, chiefly to give him the advantage of sea-air after a long illness, most of which he had recently passed in St. Mary's Hospital. We several times saw him there, and one day asked him if he knew what had really been the matter with him. He replied

quite promptly, "I'm afraid, sir, I don't; but I think what I had in my throat, the gentleman in the next bed has had in his stomach!" For fear we might be accused of appropriating an old *Punch* story, somewhat differently told, let us add that we supplied our friend George Du Maurier with the notion for one of his incomparable sketches, with which, years ago, he illustrated it.

Before Mr. Sala's Departure to Australia.

In a letter received from Mr. Sala, bearing date "Monday, 13th October, 1884," and which is a beautiful specimen of his marvellous handwriting, are these words:

"I have written this on the back of a slip of 'copy' which has served its turn. In the event of my returning from the Antipodes as 'a grand pianoforte,' this scribble may serve as a memento of yours very faithfully,

"GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA."

Dr. Quain.

Dr. Quain, to whom we once remarked that his bright and cheery manner would alone make him welcomed by any sufferer. "Ah!" he replied, with his well-known *soupçon* of an Irish brogue, "although I am by nature cheerful I began quite the other way, but was cured in my youth by a kind friend who was already an eminent physician. One day he took me with him to see a patient

who was in a very critical state, and when we approached the door of the bedroom, I put on a grave and, as I then thought, appropriately solemn countenance; but my friend turned round just in time to start with horror, and whispered, 'For mercy's sake, don't look like that, man, or the poor soul will take you for the undertaker!' I never forgot that lesson."

"Cox and Box" in the Engadine.

To aid the funds of the proposed little English church we got up our first important entertainment, the sum realized being so great that the foundation-stone was laid before we went away, and the building really started. With such friends to help as were this year assembled there, the programme took a strong musical turn, and the amusement provided was very exceptional to be able to offer in a far-off mountain village. Visitors came in crowds from the neighbouring resorts as well, and the affair was a great success all round. Sir Arthur Sullivan and Mr. Otto Goldschmidt played a splendid overture à *quatre mains*. We gave readings and recitations, which were interspersed with songs, and concluded the entertainment with the musical triumviretta, *Cox and Box*, which was admirably played by the accomplished composer of its delightful melodies; Mr. Arthur Cecil; and Mr. Barnby, who was a capital Sergeant Bouncer. I was highly gratified at moving the great actress, Madame Ristori, to tears during my reading of "The May Queen," and very pleased with the bouquets of lovely mountain-flowers.

The preparation for this entertainment was most amusing. Nothing was heard for days in the hotel but snatches of songs, poems, recitations, musical selections, and dialogue from *Cox and Box*. I used to spend the early morning in the drawing-room, rehearsing Tennyson's poem, with Mr. Otto Goldschmidt at the piano. I had thought of introducing music at certain parts of the poem, and asked Mr. Goldschmidt to kindly arrange something appropriate for me. He was so pleased with the idea (for it had never been done before) that in the kindest manner he consented, and worked as hard as though he had been going to conduct the Bach Choir. Then came the rehearsals of *Cox and Box*, so that the days were pretty well filled up, and there were one or two visitors who could not for the life of them understand it all. A friend of ours kindly offered to collect the "properties" for *Cox and Box*, and gradually his room became so full of them that the chambermaid thought he had gone mad, for it was with difficulty she could do her work. Arthur Sullivan was very anxious to have a gaudy waistcoat for Mr. Cox, and we searched Pontresina and St. Moritz high and low, but nothing of the kind could be found: when we asked for it, the only answer we received was, "Nein, nein!" (If Byron had been there he would have remarked, "I don't want *nine*, I only want *one*.") At last, after fruitless efforts, Arthur Sullivan having arrived at a stage of despair about the failure, and wondering what he should do, an idea struck me. I searched for a piece of the most startling material that I could buy, and succeeded in finding a pattern that gave one a headache to look at; "Mr. Cox" was in ecstasies. He brought me one of his own waistcoats, which I covered with this wonderful conglomeration of

colour, and the garment caused quite a flutter of amusement amongst the audience. Arthur Sullivan said he would never take the cover off that waistcoat. When we again turned our faces towards home and work, it chanced to be on the same day that Mr. and Mrs. Barnby and Arthur Cecil had fixed to go; also that both Mr. Barnby and ourselves had offered Arthur Cecil a seat in either of our carriages, our first destination being the same. Those who know Arthur Cecil and the difficulty of his life—how to make up his mind—may guess the strait in which this double offer placed him. At length the matter was decided by his learning that our carriage would start twenty minutes later than the other, and he went with us; his eccentric proceedings at our departure from the hotel (messengers being despatched each minute in search of things forgotten), and his prolonged adieux, procuring the distinction of being thus spoken of by the head waiter, who had witnessed the entertainment given by us recently, "*Das ist, gewiss, der erste komicer!*" Finally, we drove away amidst roars of laughter from a crowd of friends who saw us off—the hood of the carriage being laden with unpacked luggage, including a large wet sponge, hurriedly flung in at the last moment by Mr. Frank Schuster—and enlivened further by cries from Arthur Cecil, who shouted in turn, "I must go back!" "I haven't paid my laundress!" "I owe something at the chemist's!" "I've given nothing to the Church!"

One of Our Sojourns on the Lake of Como.

THE BIRD HAD FLOWN.

My love for the animal world is so great that to see them suffer is to me positive pain. Often when I have seen poultry shut up in a basket, waiting to be taken to some place for killing purposes, I have been sorely tempted to cut the string which tied them down, and, when no one was looking, to set them free, and once or twice I have done this, but it has caused a great commotion, and I have been reminded by Mr. Bancroft that it might lead to unpleasant results, not to say expense. Once, while at Cadenabbia, we went over with a party of friends at Varenna, where we lunched on the terrace facing one of the most lovely views on the Lake. Presently a man—a sort of gardener—who had caught a handsome blackbird, came up the avenue, followed by the proprietress of the hotel and by several others, all in a state of excitement and glee, and deposited the poor scared thing in an aviary, where there were other feathered prisoners, who, however, had become accustomed to their captivity. This poor little captured one, its heart beating with terror, was thrust in to join the rest. After a look of victory from the man, and one of joy from the others, who were delighted at this unexpected addition to their feathered family, they all retired and left us to continue our luncheon. I looked into the cage and saw the unhappy creature crouched and shivering in a corner at the bottom of it, glancing at the clear blue sky, as if wondering what it had done to deserve such a fate. It gazed at its prison bars and then at me so imploringly, as though it knew I

had it in my power to restore it to freedom. The temptation was too great to resist—none of the hotel folk were near—no one but our friendly party. I hurriedly opened wide the cage-door. The deed was done, and the poor blackbird, after a look round to see that we were all friends, dashed past and chirped his gratitude to us as he flew away into the bright sunny space above. After paying our bill, we sneaked off in our boat, homeward bound, I rejoicing in my work, but remarking, “We must not go there again this year, for goodness knows what will happen when they discover that ‘the bird has flown.’”

A Serious Blunder.

Like most theatrical people, we were tormented by callers at all hours of the day, and long had been obliged to teach our servants to deny us to the band of applicants who looked like stage aspirants or members of the fraternity of the “great unacted.” One morning, quite early, when the manservant who knew our ways, and had learnt at certain hours to deny us to all comers, had been sent on a message in the neighbourhood, the bell was answered by a foolish housemaid, who had no right to attend to its summons. The girl admitted two ladies, showed them into a room downstairs, and then announced that “Mrs. Louison wished to see us.” We were very busy at the time, and very angry at the interruption to our work. Knowing no person named Louison, a polite message was sent to the lady to the effect that “Mrs. Bancroft regretted she was unable to see them so early without an appointment.” We after-

wards heard that when this message was delivered, both the ladies, after talking together, went away on foot. In the evening a letter was received from Lady Sophia Macnamara, explaining that she was one of the callers in the morning; and had mistaken 31, Cavendish Square, for No. 37, the house of the distinguished dental surgeon, Mr. (now Sir) John Tomes, with whom an appointment had been made for the Princess Louise, on whom she was in waiting, and who was our other visitor, the foolish servant having blundered over the name. An answer from me explained the facts of the case from our side, and shortly afterwards, being invited by Sir Edward and Lady Inglefield to the honour of meeting her Royal Highness, to whom I was presented, the Princess laughingly inquired of me "if I remembered Mrs. Louison?"

"I could Do it Better Myself."

To tell an anecdote of Buckstone is nearly impossible; they must have all been printed. Some years ago, at an evening party, Mr. Dillon Croker, a well-known and admirable imitator of the prominent actors of the day, was amusing the guests in that way, when Mrs. Buckstone prevailed on him, after some difficulty, to give an imitation of her husband, who, she urged, was in another room, and really too deaf, in any case, to hear the fun. After a reluctant consent, and amidst roars of laughter, the reproduction of the favourite actor's peculiarities was most ably given. The laughter was loud enough to attract Buckstone's attention, and he entered the room in the middle of it, and stood close to Mr. Bancroft. Seeing the sort of amusement going on, for he

knew the bent of the entertainer, whose back was towards him, he asked in his funny way: "Who's he imitating now?" "You, sir," Mr. Bancroft replied, stifling his laughter. "Eh? Oh, me—ah, devilish good, I dare say! I could do it better myself!"

A Letter from J. S. Clarke.

"110, Haverstock Hill, October 5, 1879.

"DEAR BANCROFT,—

"I called at the Haymarket yesterday to learn that 'Mr. Bancroft had just left by the stage-door,' and afterwards at the Prince of Wales's, to be informed that 'Mr. Bancroft had just gone by the *front* door.' 'A plague o' both your houses,' thought I. I will try to look in at the *stage*-door of the Prince of Wales's about 12.45 to-morrow, and take my chance of finding you. But if 'Mr. Bancroft shall have left'—by the window! I shall go on and take my chance at *both doors* of the Haymarket.

—Yours sincerely,

"J. S. CLARKE."

Our Last Night at the Prince of Wales's Theatre.

I was deeply affected at bidding good-bye to the Prince of Wales's Theatre, a home so full of pleasant memories, so rich in artistic recollections.

Were I to write till doomsday I could not convey the true state of my feelings as the last nights of our management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre came nearer and

nearer. I could not sleep; my heart was sick. The prospect of having to say farewell to the dear little house, every brick of which I loved, was a sad one for me. I went there day after day, and wandered from room to room quite alone. If there had been a listener, he would have heard my audible words addressed to the silent walls, which seemed to look reproachfully at me, and to say, "After all these years of service, are you going to leave us?" I here confess that if it could have been possible, when the time of our parting drew near, I would have remained in my old home, leaving Mr. Bancroft to manage the Haymarket Theatre. I threw out a hint to him that we might conduct the two houses, but of course it was a wild notion suggested by the state of my feelings at the time; and, on reflection, it would have been more than folly, for the management of one leading theatre is enough, and often too much nowadays.

Never was a parting between two old friends more bitter than that between me and my dear home. My faithful servant, who throughout the twenty years' management personally attended me, can testify to my emotion, when, after my husband's farewell words, I left the little stage for ever, rushed up to my dressing-room, and cried bitterly.

There was a thick fog, and everything seemed to be in mourning.

It was at the old Prince of Wales's Theatre that the example was set of putting every piece on the stage in a realistic way—our stage-rooms became, in fact, such sumptuous apartments that I remember Sir William Fergusson once saying that "the only drawback to visiting our theatre was that it disgusted him with his own home."

**The Opening of the "Haymarket Theatre." A dense Fog and
"No Pit!"**

From a tiny square hole in my dressing-room I could see all that went on behind the scenes, and could hear everything that was said on the stage; while Mr. Bancroft was facing the angry demonstration against the absence of a pit, my profile might have been seen at the aforesaid square aperture very much resembling a postage stamp. The tumult became so awful that at last I rushed downstairs and walked about wringing my hands, and wondering how it would all end. If the malcontents could have but seen me, I am sure they would have ceased. I at length resolved that if the uproar lasted another three minutes I would myself address the audience, and ask them to listen to me for the sake of "Auld Lang Syne," and to say that after so long a service I ought to be permitted to dictate to them, so to speak, and, by gentle reasoning, bring about a reconciliation between us. But the noise and hooting ended, and my speech was unnecessary; my next dread was that I too should be received with groans and hisses, and I was cold with fear; but my reception when I made my appearance was so great, the welcome so hearty and prolonged, that, combined with all the nervous excitement, it gave me courage, and I acted better than I had done for some time. The night was one of the most awful I can remember; a short time before the doors were opened I went round the beautiful theatre, and could scarcely see the decorations through the black veil; the elements indeed were far from propitious, and, of course, this calamity, for I can call it nothing else,

sadly helped to fan the flame of discontent and temper amongst the pittites, and our positions for the time were not to be envied.

During the evening I had received many beautiful bouquets, which it was impossible to take home, as no carriage could fetch us, and no cab would take a fare; in fact, it was safer to walk, so I left my flowers in charge of my dresser; and our servant, who had come from the house to help us home, walked ahead of us with a *white* bouquet in his hand to serve as a kind of beacon. There were many curious incidents connected with that eventful night. A party of four started from Putney in clear weather, but suddenly found themselves enveloped in the black fog, on nearing town; they managed to reach the theatre, but when the performance was over were persuaded to make their way for the night to a friend's house in Bayswater, where the carriage and horse might be accommodated in the mews. After a tedious journey of some hours they arrived at the house, but found the mews more than full of other befogged victims. At their wits' end, they were at length forced to this expedient: the carriage was left outside in the road, and the horse (a valuable animal just recovered from a long sickness) and man passed the night in the hall of the house!

A curious incident also happened to our dear friend, Dr. George Bird, who, after leaving the theatre, of course followed his maxim to "always walk home from the play," a task, however, by no means easy on this occasion. Living in Welbeck Street, he eventually crossed Oxford Street safely, and then felt convinced that he was somewhere parallel with his own house; but whether he was struggling along in Harley Street, Wimpole Street, or Welbeck Street, he felt utterly unable to determine. At

length the brilliant idea occurred to him, that in this land of doctors, if he groped his way to some door which carried a brass-plate, the name on it would be sure, by the aid of a match, to tell him whereabouts he really was. He at once carried out his plan, and in the first doorway he entered, found a brass-plate. He then lighted a match, and *read his own name!*

A Letter from E. A. Sothern.

“San Francisco, California, March 25, 1880.

“DEAR BANCROFT,—

“I’m a poor hand at letter-writing; I’ve such hundreds to answer that I hurry-scurry through them as best I can; but I *must* send you a scrawl to congratulate you on the admirable way in which you quelled the disgraceful disturbance on your first night at the Haymarket. Leaving your snug little theatre where you had done so much—so very much—to improve our art, and where you were so brilliantly successful, seemed to me a most dangerous move; but I admire your pluck in taking the Haymarket, and in doing precisely what I advised Buckstone and the trustees to do ten or twelve years ago—*i.e.* abolish the pit. There was no other way of making the theatre pay with the risk and heavy expenses of first-class management and first-class artists.

“I most sincerely hope and believe that your daring experiment will be crowned with the success that you and Mrs. Bancroft so richly deserve.—Sincerely yours,

“E. A. SOTHERN.”

Theatrical Opinions by Sothern and Coquelin.

Extract from a series of theatrical opinions by Sothern, which appeared in America under the title of *Birds of a Feather*.

“Among the actresses, I should certainly place Mrs. Bancroft and Mrs. Kendal in the foremost rank, their specialities being high comedy. Mrs. Bancroft I consider the best actress on the English stage; in fact, I might say on any stage. She commenced her profession as a burlesque actress, and was one of the best we have ever seen in England. When she took the Prince of Wales’s Theatre she discarded the burlesque business, and, to the amazement of every one, proved herself the finest comedy actress in London. Her face, though not essentially pretty, is a mass of intelligence.”

“**CHER MONSIEUR BANCROFT,—**

“**Vous avez un excellent théâtre que vous dirigez en maître . . . et en maître artiste . . . que pouvez vous desirer de plus ?—Votre ami,**

“**C. COQUELIN.”**

The Accomplished “Ape.”

I give this characteristic note from the accomplished “Ape”:

“**Studio, 53, Mortimer Street, Regent Street, W.,**
“**Thursday evening.**

“**DEAR BANCROFT,—**

“**I have sent your fac-simile to the Grosvenor. I hope you will be well hanged—I mean the portrait.—**
Truly yours,

“**C. PELLEGRINI.”**

Anecdote of Macready.

It is dangerous to tell anecdotes of any known actors of the past, lest they should before have been in print, which doubtless is the case with a story told to us years ago by one of the past generation of tragedians. Macready was playing *Hamlet* in a country theatre, and during rehearsals had so severely found fault with the actor, a local favourite, who took the part of the King, that his Majesty determined at night to be revenged upon the great man by reeling, when stabbed by Hamlet, to the centre of the stage (instead of remaining at the back), and falling dead upon the very spot Macready had reserved for his own final acting before he expired in Horatio's arms. Macready groaned and grunted, "Die further up the stage, sir." "What are you doing down here, sir?" "Get up, and die elsewhere, sir," when, to the amazement of the audience, the King sat bolt upright upon the stage, and said, "Look here, Mr. Macready, you had your way at rehearsal, but *I'm King now, and I shall die where I please!*"

Anecdotes of F. C. Burnand.

A friend who had just heard of the death of John Bright remarked, "Well, peace to his ashes!" to which Burnand replied, "One Ash!" Bright's residence was called "One Ash."

My son, during a stay at Ramsgate with his tutor, called upon Mr. Burnand, and remarked that the tide being out, he had been on the Goodwin Sands with his "Coach." "Really," he answered. "I never knew one could drive on them."

Concerning "A Lesson," by Burnand.

"18, Royal Crescent, Ramsgate,

"November 27, 1881.

"MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—

"Excuse the style of this letter, for after such a fearful night *here*, not at the Haymarket, I write with (a pen—yes) *several tiles off*! I sincerely congratulate you upon what appears from the *Observer* to have been a Big Success with a very Small Piece. We came down here to rest and be thankful. We did not rest, and we are not thankful. Such a gale! The centre part of the crescent veranda at the back blown right down, and the doors blockaded; chimneys nowhere; wrecks—alas! everywhere. Tugs and lifeboats in full employ. 'A night for crossing!' Well, to some it was a night for crossing themselves and saying their prayers, for we thought that Mother Shipton's prophecies had come true, and there was an end of everything, as there is to this letter. Wife and self immensely pleased. We thought of you at 10 and 10.30 last night, and wondered.—Yours very truly,

"F. C. BURNAND."

Holiday Notes.

Again we had a hearty welcome to the Engadine, which was that year for the first time honoured by a visit from the Prince and Princess Christian, who were accompanied by the two young princes. I had the opportunity of nursing the young Prince Christian through diphtheria, which earned for me from their Royal Highnesses the title of "Dr. Bancroft."

We yielded to a request to further aid the Church, and having the great advantage of Arthur Cecil's companionship, resolved, in addition to readings, songs, and recitations, to act *The Vicarage*, finding great help also in the presence and good nature of two distinguished musicians, Mr. Shakespeare, and Mr. Arthur Goring Thomas.

This was a very successful entertainment, and, as the tickets were ten francs each, realized a large sum. The Prince and Princess Christian honoured us with their presence, and all the available vehicles were chartered by visitors from St. Moritz. A gentleman carried a large copy of the programme to the summit of Piz Languard, and there attached it to a pole, earning the title of "Bill-Poster to the Higher Alps."

Poetry and Sandwiches.

Some of our excursions this year were made in the companionship of Mr. J. C. Parkinson, and one day we all three went together to the Alp Grüm. We started at an early hour, carrying a simple luncheon

with us, consisting of substantial sandwiches and wine. Mr. Parkinson, a keen admirer of beautiful scenery, constantly expressed his delight at the views we passed on the way. On reaching the summit, we all sat down on a bench, and, while we gazed on the lovely panorama before us, prepared to unpack our lunch. During this operation, Mr. Parkinson, quite lost in admiration of the scene, went into ecstasies, and gave vent to his rapture in words, "Oh, this is indeed divine! *What a sky! Look* at that exquisitely peaceful valley, wrapped in rich verdure, and surrounded by those grand, snow-clad mountains. Where is there a painter who can reproduce *such* colours, *such* tints, *such* shadows? No, Nature will *not* be imitated! How *noble* are those rugged peaks; grand, impregnable, defiant! This is indeed a heavenly spot for romantic meditation." Then, suddenly looking at the lunch, "*Oh, the beasts! I ordered beef, and they've given me ham!*" The sudden transition from poetry to sandwiches was most amusing.

An Awkward Position.

How we enjoyed this long holiday! How we delighted in the feeling that Paris, this time, did not mean the end of it! We went about, and saw more of the gay city than we ever had the chance to know before. One day we drove to Père la Chaise, and, of course, went to gaze upon the tomb of Abelard and Héloïse, and other vaults almost as celebrated: then, after wandering in the mid-day heat up and down its countless alleys, we emerged upon the broad main path of the cemetery, at the end of which, above its noble flight of

steps, we saw a distant crowd and the figure of a man violently gesticulating in its midst. We thought ourselves indeed in luck; there was evidently a big funeral taking place, and we just in time to hear one of the customary orations delivered at the obsequies by some eminent Frenchman. We hurried down the path, and up the steep stone steps, hearing, nearer and nearer, the voice of the speaker, and noticing, more and more, the rapt attention of his listeners. Suddenly, as we got quite close, we found, to our great surprise, that the speech was being made in our own language, and, as we panted up the last few steps, exhausted by heat and fatigue, we just caught these words: "Yes, that is the tomb of the great Cherubini; there lie the remains of the distinguished actor, Talma; and there" (in an undertone, pointing us out to the listeners) "are Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft." The crowd consisted of a "self-conducted" tourist party, and we both felt fit to sink into one of the open graves!

An Anecdote of Charles Kean.

Many are the stories of Kean; most of them doubtless have been often told, but perhaps one or two have so far escaped record. He was, as has previously been mentioned, easily upset, when acting, by even a trifling noise. Years ago a habit prevailed in a seaport town he visited, among the occupants of the gallery of the theatre, of cracking nuts throughout the performance. This played havoc with Kean when he acted there. On the following morning he called those who travelled with him together, and, after loudly bewailing his sufferings and anathematizing the gallery boys, gave instructions to his

followers to go into the town and buy up every nut within its walls, either in the shops or on the quays. This was done. The result for the two following evenings was perfect success, crowned by the chuckles of the tragedian ; but oh, the third night !

The fruiterers, perplexed by the sudden and unaccountable demand for nuts, had sent to Covent Garden and other sources for a plentiful supply to meet its hoped-for continuance ; the demand fell off, there was a glut in the local market, the nuts so deluged the town that they were sold more abundantly and cheaper than ever. Crack !—crack !—crack ! was the running fire throughout the succeeding performances, and the rest of Kean's engagement was fulfilled in torment.

A Carriage Accident.

An unfortunate accident befell us in 1880. We were driving a pair of young and rather restive horses, which were giving the coachman some trouble ; the weather was bad, and heavy flakes of snow were falling. While in earnest talk about the play, we suddenly grew conscious that we were going at great speed. This happened in Goodge Street. There one of the horses got a leg over the pole, and in his efforts to extricate himself kicked his companion, and the pair became maddened. We were now nearing Middlesex Hospital. Things grew worse from the state of the wet wooden pavement, and the coachman found himself powerless to pull the horses up, so did his best to save us by driving them into a coal-waggon : this being empty, we cannoned from it, but severely injured the horse that drew it. The concussion, however, stopped the direction of our course, and the

poor beasts dashed on to the pavement and into the railings of the private house adjoining the chemist's at the corner of Berners Street. The railings were smashed in, and the stones at their base torn up. Our descent into the area was only prevented by a further flat railing or grating, which enclosed it, still to be found in some old houses. The brougham, by the force of all this, was turned over on its side, which helped to bring the horses, wounded and entangled in their broken harness, to a standstill. After a while, we were dragged out through the window, fortunately unhurt, so far as flesh-wounds went. The coachman was released from a perilous position more frightened than injured, for he never afterwards drove with his previous courage.

Although there was no doctor's bill to pay (if we may say so without slight to veterinary surgeons), the reaction from the excitement and alarm dwelt on our nerves for some time.

It was singular that this really alarming accident did not reach the newspapers, while a few months previously a broken rein and a consequent but momentary confusion, which was arrested by the prompt action of a policeman (certainly in the heart of town), was placarded in the evening papers almost as soon as the occurrence took place.

It is well to go from grave to gay when one can. I remember my husband, who is very cool-headed in times of peril, putting all the windows down and then holding me very tight until the crash came. With a feeling of thankfulness that we escaped from what might have been, for us, very serious, I will tell what happened afterwards. I was dragged through the carriage-window by a kindly navvy, whose black face almost frightened me out of the poor senses I had left. Mr. Bancroft, whose hat, I may

say, resembled a concertina, took me into the chemist's close by, where they were most kind, and gave me a restorative. With difficulty I got through my work that night, for my nerves were completely unstrung. On the following morning, after rehearsal, we walked down Northumberland Avenue to the Thames Embankment, and left orders for the coachman to follow us there. I had by no means recovered from the shock, and was still dwelling on our lucky escape, when my attention was drawn to an uncovered cart being dragged lazily along by a sleepy-looking horse, driven by a still more sleepy-looking man. Inside the cart sat six very old Chelsea pensioners, on six very old Windsor chairs, three on each side facing one another. They had evidently been sent for an outing, but to judge from the sad expression of their faces, and their weary eyes bent on the bottom of the cart, wondering, perhaps, what they had done to be so shaken about, neither looking to the left nor to the right, they appeared to be more or less indifferent to everything that was going on, looking the picture of resignation to the inevitable. A street arab, who at a glance keenly appreciated the situation, stood gazing at them with open mouth and a threatening twinkle in his eyes ; and as this cart-load of melancholy humanity slowly went along, he said, in a whining voice, the tone of which fitted wonderfully to the appearance of these poor soldiers of a long past, "Oh, what a day you're 'aving!" Almost before our smiles had vanished, we saw our carriage approaching, when our countenances suddenly changed, as we asked ourselves, "Where on earth did the horse come from?" The coachman explained that, "as our own horses were in hospital, and knowing how nervous I was, he had borrowed a quiet one." I am sure the animal came from some circus ; his colour was a sort of rose-pink, he

had pale, sleepy eyes, and a long cream-coloured tail—a horse that would sit down when he heard a German band, from force of habit; his pace was that of the trained steed long accustomed to carry a spangled lady on a decorated flat board like an afternoon tea-table. The carriage was an open one, and I implored to be allowed to get out and walk, for we were already attracting attention, and I feared the comic papers. The poor rose-pink steed was quite calm; no street noises disturbed him, and he was callous to such rude remarks as “Oh! I say, this is a horse wot leans agin’ the wall to think!” “’Ere, you with the long tail, a-robbin’ the sweepers of their coppers. Why don’t you tie it up, mum, with blue ribbon, or send him ’ome to the Zoo?” The circus-like steed took no notice, and, I dare say, thought the boys were but clowns in the ring. Had he seen a hoop, I am sure he would have tried to jump through it! At last we reached home, and the poor thing was sent back to his native sawdust.

A Letter from Mr. Gladstone.

Before the play commenced, one night we learnt that Mr. Gladstone had stall-seats which were far removed from the stage, and when he found this was so, had asked if anything could be done to place him nearer, as his sense of hearing was becoming less keen. We found the only vacant seats in the house were in the Royal Box, which we begged to place at his disposal. In a day or two came this autograph letter of thanks in generous acknowledgment of so small a politeness:—

“10, Downing Street, Whitehall, April 5, 1881.

“DEAR SIR,—

“Let me thank you very much for your courtesy in allowing me with my party to occupy a most advantageous post in your theatre on Saturday night. By so doing you secured to me the fulness of a great treat, which otherwise declining powers of sight and hearing would somewhat have impaired.

“For the capital acting of the chief parts I was prepared; but the whole cast, likewise, seemed to me excellent.—I remain, dear sir, your very faithful and obliged,

“S. B. Bancroft, Esq.”

“W. E. GLADSTONE.

Black Tuesday.

“Black Tuesday” (January 18, 1881) will be long remembered. On that afternoon we saw one pavement of Regent Street quite clear of snow, while on the opposite side the shops were closed, the drifts of snow being half-way up the shutters; the streets were deserts, and coachmen of all vehicles had a hard time of it. It was weeks before the mounds of snow piled in the squares and other open spots quite disappeared. Naturally all places of amusement suffered very much, and the theatres had their share of empty benches.

In a letter to a friend I thus described the day: “The cyclone of Tuesday last photographed itself upon my memory, and the negative is kept, so that I can reproduce it whenever it may be necessary. It seemed as if Siberia and all the Russias had sent their snow to London, to be added to and piled upon our own. The anxiety was, “How shall we manage to struggle to the theatre at

night?' But where there's a will there's a way, and although the former was pretty well frozen, and the latter was blocked up with snow, we turned up at the stage-door in appearance like Father (and Mother) Christmas. Every member of the company reached the theatre safely, several having to come long distances; it was funny to see the various effects the weather had on us: some faces were white, others red, others blue—I was all three! *The Vicarage* was the first piece, and when the curtain rose, discovering Mr. Cecil and myself as the Vicar and his wife playing chess, the auditorium presented the strangest picture, but all the same so ludicrous, that I could hardly resist laughing outright. There were seven people in the stalls with topcoats, mufflers, fur cloaks, and large hoods—they must have fancied themselves in sleighs; hardly any one in the balcony, and the people in the rest of the theatre seemed swathed in shawls, leaving nothing but a row of noses to be seen. How they must have loved the drama to come at all! I could not proceed for a moment, for I saw at once the comic aspect of the situation, and when my gaze met the expression on the faces of the stall-occupants I could not restrain my laughter any longer. I should have much liked to have invited them to tea in the green-room, and have had no performance at all! It was like playing to a dead wall, not a sound of applause or laughter throughout the evening. They might have been figures from Madame Tussaud's! When we started to walk or 'thud' home, the expression on both our faces would have been a study for a painter. The snow was coming down fast, in flakes as big as notes waiting for an answer. We were soon as white as snow, and looked for all the world like something 'doomed for a certain time to walk the earth.' When at last we arrived home, we found the coachman with a

spade shovelling away the miniature mountains from the front of the house ; I suppose he thought we were a part of them, for he nearly shovelled us into the road too, before he discovered that we were his master and mistress."

Mr. Edmund Yates, on being asked what a very sensitive mutual friend would think of his caricature in *Vanity Fair*, he replied, "He would tell everybody he thought it delightful ; but when he got home, would lock the door, and rub his head in the hearthrug !"

**Letters from Dion Boucicault, Henry Irving, Arthur Cecil
Blunt, and William Winter.**

From DION BOUCICAULT.

" 108, Park Street, Friday, June 9, 1882.

"**MY DEAR B.—**

"I send you the promised sun-picture, or photograph, with inscription. Either Monday or Tuesday—whichever is the more convenient, will find me delighted to see the play.

"Now, my dear friend, will you feel offended with an old soldier if he intrudes on your plan of battle by a remark ?

"Why are Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft taking a back-seat in their own theatre ? They efface themselves ! Who made the establishment ? with whom is it wholly identified ? of what materials is it built ? There—it's out !

"Your wife's work may be lightened by a selection of those bright comedy parts which she plays without exertion ; but *play* she must, and it surely gives her no

more trouble to play Polly Eccles than a scene or two in *Odette*.

“Tell Marie, with my love, that there is nothing so destructive as *rest*, if persisted in; you must alter the vowel—it becomes *rust*, and it eats into life. Hers is too precious to let her fool it away; she is looking splendid, and as fresh as a pat of butter. Let us see her in a good romping girl; why don’t you get up a version of the *Country Girl*? Let her play *Hoyden*, and you play *Lord Foppington*.

“I dare say you will ask me to mind my own business. Well, if you do, I shall say that the leading interests of the Drama, which you and she now represent, are my business; that the regard and affection I have personally entertained for your wife since she was a child—pray excuse me—and the friendship I have felt for you, induced me to repeat what I have heard from more than one person on both sides of the Atlantic.—Ever yours sincerely,

“DION BOUCICAULT.”

From HENRY IRVING.

“15a, Grafton Street, Bond Street, W.,
“July 25, 1882.

“MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

“I shall wear your gift—and a rare one it is—as I wear you, the giver, in my heart.

“My regard for you is not a fading one. In this world there is not too much fair friendship, is there? And I hope it is a gratification to you—it is to me, old friend—to know that we can count alike upon a friend in sorrow and in gladness.—Affectionately yours,

“HENRY IRVING.”

From ARTHUR CECIL BLUNT.

"Garrick Club, July 14, 1882.

"DEAREST MRS. B.,—

"I beg you and B. to accept this little present, which I offer you as a souvenir of my happy association with you for six years—a longer period than I have ever passed under any other management, and a pleasanter one by far than I can ever expect to pass elsewhere. With every good wish, always yours affectionately,

"ARTHUR CECIL BLUNT."

Another kind expression of farewell from one we have named before, and who had sent us from his own land his delightful books describing his rambles in ours that he loved so well, reached us just as we were leaving England :—

From WILLIAM WINTER.

"Morley's Hotel, August 2, 1882.

"MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

"Your kind and gentle farewell word has been received. The only sad thing about coming to England is that one has to go away.

"I think that I leave here, at least, a *few* loving friends who won't forget me. I am sure that I take away with me memories that will always be affectionately cherished. I am truly glad to have your portrait. Remember me to Mrs. Bancroft. I am always her friend and yours.

"WILLIAM WINTER."

The Bishop of Gloucester.

When we reached the Engadine, we found the little English church almost completed, and during our stay it was opened with some solemnity, the Bishop of Bedford having come from England to perform the ceremony; while the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, a well-known mountaineer and lover of the glaciers, whose friendship and hospitality we had enjoyed in London, was also present. May we pause a moment to say how highly we have always esteemed the privilege of acquaintance with one whose character must ever ennable him in the thoughts of those who are, in the true sense, hero-worshippers? for no act of heroism could be greater than his, when, now some five-and-twenty years ago, through a dreadful railway accident, although terribly scalded, wounded, and with a broken leg, he dragged himself from underneath the *débris* of the wrecked train, refusing to allow his own condition, which seemed at the time likely to be fatal, to be relieved until he had ministered what spiritual help he could to those around him who were even nearer unto death.

His lordship, during this stay in the Engadine remained faithful to his love for the Bel Alp and the Great Aletsch, the largest ice-field in Switzerland, for we remember his saying that, "if he might venture the opinion, the Morterasch, as a glacier, was hardly fit for a gentleman."

A Poetic Compliment.

On one of our wanderings through the Pontresina woods, we sat upon the bench which had been erected by the kind villagers as a compliment to me, and which was inscribed with my name. On the seat we read these words, written in pencil :

“If all the world’s a stage, as men repeat,
And all the men and women in it actors,
The more we owe to one who gives the seat,
And saves us all the greed of Swiss contractors.

“And yet, ungrateful still, a fault I trace,
For Bancroft’s not the name my faith was built on,
How gladly would I pay for any place,
If only I might sit by Marie Wilton.”

Later in our ramble, on the hillside above the Samaden road, while watching the woodcutters at work, by way of contrast, we came across this remarkable specimen of the English language affixed to a tree, as a warning to passers-by : “In the month of Juli and August it will cuttered the wood in the Forrest Because by the transport stones also are coming down is it necessary to have care of it.”

Mr. Labouchere.

Some of us ended our holiday at the Italian lakes ; again attracted by the magnetic Como, we stayed first at Cadenabbia, where we found Mr. Labouchere in the solitary companionship of his cigarettes, peacefully recuperating from the labours of the session.

We were walking in the garden one lovely evening, having arranged to dine late, when we saw, through the open windows, the crowded *table d'hôte*. In a conspicuous position we also saw, to our surprise, and I think to our amusement, the tired M.P. seated between two well-known dignitaries of the Church, and evidently completing a merry trio. When the meal was over, chancing to have an hotel acquaintance with one of these prelates, we were chatting together by the shore of the lake, and asked how he had got on at dinner. "Oh, admirably," he replied. "My friend and I were so fortunate in our neighbour, a delightful companion. I wonder if you happen to know who the gentleman is? He is sitting over there."

Under the olive grove the senior member for Northampton was seated in an American rocking-chair surrounded by a halo of smoke.

"Oh," we answered, "don't you recognize him?" "No; is he some one we should have known by sight? People look so different abroad." "That is Mr. Labouchere," we briefly replied. "Really, you don't say so!"

What those simple words might have meant to convey we never knew, for the speaker hurried off to impart the information to his companion.

At one time, when Mr. Labouchere was proprietor of the Queen's Theatre in Long Acre, there was a general protest and outcry against the "Fee System," and when the alarmed attendants wished to know what they were to do, he replied, "Don't ask for any fee, but hang about!"

The Italian Bric-à-Brac Merchant on the Lake of Como.

Hard by the hotel was a shop kept by an old curiosity-dealer, with whom we had rare fun one day. We had been buying some pretty pieces of silk, and, when about to leave, stopped to turn over a tray full of odds and ends, in which old shoe-buckles, stick-handles, medals, coins, supposed relics from Pompeii, trophies from battle-fields, and every conceivable kind of rubbish were mixed together in a wonderful way. In this *olla podrida* we came across a mysterious-looking piece of old ironwork which, on closer inspection, amused us immensely. We saw our way to a joke with the *bric-à-brac* merchant, and retired to a distant corner with our treasure, pretending to examine it closely. A friend was passing the little shop at the moment, and we made him a party to the fun, anxiously asking his opinion on the worth of our discovery, and entering into apparent ecstasies over it, to the amazement of the old Italian, who closely watched us. We weighed it, breathed on it, polished it, whispered over it, then took it to the sunlight and inspected it through a magnifying-glass in various ways. At last we asked the shopkeeper what he would take for the apparent treasure. The wily dealer, completely taken in by our pantomime, was at once alive to its merits, and assured us it was "a rare specimen." We cordially agreed, and begged him to be candid as to its being really genuine. "Mais oui, oui, oui; c'est vraiment—vraiment véritable: et bien remarquable!" "Combien?" "Pour vous—mais seulement pour vous—vingt-cinq francs."

We suggested the five without the twenty. The old

man nearly had a fit, and asked us if we wished to rob him. We worked up the scene to a very funny pitch, and were obliged to go away to hide our laughter, saying we would think the matter over.

This wonderful discovery, this veritable antiquity, was, in truth, a broken fragment of worthless old iron, impressed with the Royal Arms and motto of England, and stamped with these words, "Barnard, Bishop & Barnards' Patent Mowing Machine!"

The Mysterious Black Cat.

An odd coincidence was for years connected with our management at the Prince of Wales's Theatre which may be worth telling—its relation, at any rate, will interest the superstitious and amuse the sceptical. I allude to the appearance by the stage-door on the eve of successful productions of a black cat, or rather kitten. The mystic time for this apparition was always night, and each fresh arrival was christened after a leading character of the coming play. It really sounds incredible, but on many Fridays preceding the Saturday productions our little harbinger of good luck ran in. It grew to be recognized by every one as the foreteller of success; and when we arrived at the theatre on the Saturday, on which day we nearly always produced our plays, or started any new venture, we were greeted by our hall-porter with the news, announced in all seriousness, "The black cat has arrived, madam."

For many years our sable friend presented himself at the stage-door, passed through the hall, and ran straight into the theatre. On the Friday night after the last

rehearsal of the *School for Scandal* we were leaving the theatre on our way home, and I felt much disappointed that our ghostly visitor had failed us, when before we reached the end of the street, a wee black thing, no bigger than a rat, rushed past us, as if he knew he was late. I stood still to watch, and saw him run through the hall-door, and then went home delighted. The little thing was christened Joseph Surface, and soon became a great pet with every one; but, unlike his namesake, was a faithful friend. He was never so happy as during rehearsals, for he was on affectionate terms with all the company, and was more like a dog in sagacity. While we were abroad for this holiday he died, and was buried under the Haymarket stage by the servants who had often fondled him. Every one in the theatre felt a sincere pang of regret at the death of "dear Joe." Had I asked either of my friends, Mr. Burnand or Mr. Gilbert, for an epitaph, they doubtless would have forestalled me in suggesting, "Requiescat in pace."

Letter from Lord Wolseley.

Oh, the penalty that has to be paid on returning from a holiday by those who, like ourselves, never allow letters to be sent after them! However, among the basketfuls of correspondence we found waiting this year was one delightful letter written from Alexandria on August 18th by Lord (then Sir Garnet) Wolseley, in which he cheerily foretold the victory of Tel-el-Kebir in these words: "The 'army' keeps arriving daily, and I hope very soon to be in a position to bring Mr. Arabi to book."

The realization of this prophecy, and the curious incident of a strange atmospheric phenomenon caused by the

comet of that year, and which immediately preceded it, prompted some verses, that were sent to the hero of the achievement and thus acknowledged:—

“ War Office, March 6, 1883.

“ **MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—**

“ I am very glad Mr. Bancroft induced you to send me your lines on Tel-el-Kebir, for I like them extremely.

“ The word-painting is admirable, and the whole incident is told most feelingly and well.

“ I shall put the little poem away among my treasures. Many, many thanks for it.—Sincerely yours,

“ **WOLSELEY.**”

Garrick's Advice to Jack Bannister.

“ You may humbug the town as a tragedian, but comedy is a serious thing, my boy, so don't try that just yet.”

An Eccentric Old Lady.

Amongst my numerous acquaintances I have met with some curious people with characteristics—possibly eccentricities—that might be passed over by many, but, as I have before said, from my childhood I have never failed to detect these peculiarities. Until her death, I had the pleasure of knowing a very eccentric and interesting old maiden lady. I say the pleasure, because I had a great regard for her. Her nature was kindly and amiable, and no one ever heard her say an ungenerous

thing of man, woman, or child. She never joined in malicious gossip, and when she was unable to praise was silent—a noble example to womankind, I take it.

Well, this dear lady, who was eighty-five years old, remembered many extraordinary events. Her anecdotes of days gone by were very diverting; and, although she dressed in the most Noah's Ark sort of fashion, and spoke in the most old-world way, her nature was as bright as a girl's. She loved the society of young people, mixing herself up with their lives with the keenest enjoyment. All her recollections of the past were merry; she seemed to be ever happy, and one day when asked if she would like to live to a tremendous age, she laughingly replied, "Oh, I don't much care; only I hope when I do die they'll bury me in a cheerful churchyard."

At an evening party once there had been a great deal of classical music, which was evidently somewhat too serious for her taste, for, when asked what she thought of it, she replied in her usual cheery manner, "Oh, it is most charming! *Do* you think you could get them to play, 'Tommy, make room for your uncle?' It is charmingly amusing, and I should be mightily obligeed."

Mr. Bancroft one evening took her in to dinner, and remarked upon her wonderful health. The vivacious old lady replied that she had never known pain or ache in her life. "Not even toothache?" "Oh, never; don't know what the dreadful thing means." "Not a simple headache?" "Oh no, never; I think it *too* ridiculous!" "Nor ever a heartache?" The old lady at once answered archly, smiling sweetly at her companion, "Not yet."

I remember being present at an "at home" she gave. Her rooms were most quaintly furnished, and one seemed to live far, far back in the past as one gazed at her spinet,

and her old-fashioned harp. Her dress comprised a pink silk skirt, trimmed with a matchless lace flounce, a low black velvet bodice, a satin scarf of the family tartan, for she was proud of her Scotch descent; open-worked stockings, and sandalled shoes. She carried a bag of some beautiful material over her arm, her "get up" being completed by a necklace of old coral medallions and long earrings to match. Her hair was plaited in a small knot at the back, and three lank ringlets hung on each side of her face. She received her guests with a low curtsey, and was the cheeriest of hostesses. There was a great deal of music, but not a single sad air was played. The old lady related anecdotes in abundance, and her great anxiety was to see all the young people who were there happy and amiable.

She had a habit of speaking her thoughts aloud, and this peculiarity sometimes caused much amusement. A young lady who had a very pretty voice was asked to sing, and at once consented. The guests gathered round. Our old friend sat near the singer, and commented audibly on the song with delightful unconsciousness, which made it hard for any one to preserve a grave countenance. The song commenced:—

"Kathleen Mavourneen,
(“Oh, what a charming name!”)
the gray dawn is breaking,
(“Yes, I’ve seen it often, coming home from a ball.”)
The horn of the hunter is heard on the hill,
(“Oh yes, I know, in Switzerland.”)
The lark from her light wings, the bright dew is shaking,
(“Oh, the dear little thing!”)
Kathleen Mavourneen—what, slumbering still!
(“Perhaps she was up late, poor dear.”)

Oh, dost thou not know that this night we must sever?

Oh, dost thou not know, love, this night we must part?

(“Oh, how can she be so cruel!”)

It may be for years or it may be for ever,

(“Oh, gracious, what a long time!”)

Then wake from thy slumber, thou voice of my heart!”

(“Get up, you lazy hussy!”)

I need not say that it was with extreme difficulty the young vocalist could continue, and when the old lady shouted ‘Get up, you lazy hussy!’ we were all convulsed.

Just as her last guests were preparing to go, our hostess sat down to the spinet to play, as she said, “God save the King.”

The Last Night of “Caste.”

“The Red House, Hornton Street, Campden Hill,
“March 6, 1883.

“MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—

“Believe me, I reciprocate all the kind feelings expressed in your letter. It will be to me a source of the greatest pleasure to be once more ‘Sam’ to your ‘Polly’ on the occasion of your last appearance in *Caste*, associated as that play is, in my mind, with such a host of pleasant and kindly memories. Those old times were indeed happy ones, and the recollection of them is not easily to be effaced.—Believe me, dear Mrs. Bancroft, always yours,

“JOHN HARE.”

“Save the Wee Lassie!”

This was followed by the gift of a bracelet composed of large brilliants, and inscribed, “From Captain Hawtree to Polly Eccles,” was strong in contrast to my first experience of souvenirs in a theatre, which takes me back again to childhood’s days.

I have a vivid recollection of acting in a temporary theatre built on the beach of a small fishing town somewhere in the north, and will relate an incident which abruptly terminated one of my performances. The floor of our dressing-room was simply the sandy shore, and there was a wooden plank close to the table, upon which I stood, preparing for a Highland-fling, to be danced by me. Suddenly an unusually high tide took place, and the water made rapid progress into this room, so I hurried upstairs, but not before my thin shoes had been well-filled with sea-water. The reader, who may know the dance-step of a fling, will be able to imagine the effect my wet shoes had upon the stage. I must have caused a great sensation amongst the fishwives, who, unable to control their ecstasies, threw herrings on to the stage to me with such exclamations as “The bonnie wee bairnie!” “She’s just like ma Maggie!” “Oh, the dearie!” “Fling her a herrin’!” I intended to take no notice of this eccentric form of bouquet (so horrified was I), but some one called out from the wings, “Pick them up and acknowledge them, or there will be a riot.” So, frightened out of my life, I forced an alarmed smile upon my face, gathered up the herrings, which slipped from my hands as soon as I took hold of them, and got off the stage as quickly as possible, my small arms being laden with these fishy offerings. The dance was loudly encored; but before I had got half

through its repetition, an alarm was raised : "The sea is on us ! The sea is on us ! Save the wee lassie !"

The lights suddenly went out, and the scrimmage was awful. I was seized and thrust into a large fish-basket (I smelt it !) and carried off on some man's back, who, I believe, jumped on the stage to rescue me. I can smell those herrings still, and have never cared for fish since that experience !

A Letter from an Old Actor.

"DEAR SIR,—

"I have to thank you for a great pleasure last night, in the charming performance of Mrs. Bancroft. It is years since I saw the play, and I confess to you that I did not know there was an English-speaking actress who could move me to tears and laughter by turns as the accomplished Peg Woffington did last night. Her comedy reminded me of poor Nisbett in her best days; and her pathos had the sincerity in it which that accomplished comedienne never reached.

"I had not seen you act before, and your Triplet was a worthy pendant to your lady's admirable picture.—With many thanks, I am, yours faithfully,

"S. B. Bancroft, Esq."

"GEO. VANDENHOFF."

Behind the Scenes.

It would be very interesting to an audience to be given now and then a peep behind the scenes, or in the green-room; they would often see what good servants to the public are the actors; how often, when suffering acute

pain, they have gone through their work so bravely that the audience has not detected even a look of it. The public owe more to the actor than they will perhaps be prepared to admit. I have known that grand old actress Mrs. Stirling, when suffering from a severe attack of bronchitis, to go to the theatre in all weathers, and at great risk, more especially at her age, and when she ought to have been in bed. I have seen her arrive scarcely able to breathe, but insisting upon going through her duties ; this has often been an anxiety, for while admiring her courage, I have feared bad results from it. Mrs. Stirling's sight being impaired, she always dreaded stairs ; and unfortunately for her, in the hall of Caryl Court there was a long gallery and then a tall flight of steps leading from it to the stage, while behind the scenes there was another flight to reach this gallery. Luckily she did not enter alone, but had the kindly help of Miss Eleanor Calhoun, who played her daughter in the piece. When Mrs. Stirling was ill, these stairs would naturally be a double anxiety, but she would listen to no change of entrance in the scene which might affect the arrangement of the play, and I often felt anxious about her. One would imagine, to see her slowly and cautiously ascend the flight of steps, stopping every now and then to murmur, "Oh, these stairs !" that she would scarcely be able to get through her part ; but although she has stood gasping for breath and terribly ailing, the moment her cue came to go on the stage she seemed to become twenty years younger : vigour returned to her limbs, and she walked with such a firm and stately gait that the change was extraordinary. Her grand voice was alone worth a good walk to listen to, and her acting of the part was as no one else could act it.

Recollections of H. J. Byron.

Poor Byron, who, it may not generally be known, was of the same lineage as the immortal poet, as a reference to Lodge or Burke will show, and, as one may have imagined his great relative to have been, was a Bohemian to the core. Talking one day at dinner of his distinguished ancestor, when eating heartily of turkey, he said, "I'm quite ashamed, but I must have some more of that bird." Mrs. Byron, as he was assisted, remarked, "My dear Harry, really you'll be ill; how greedy you are!" He laughed, and replied, "It's all in honour of the family motto, '*Greedy (crede) Byron!*'"

During his long career as a dramatic author, which must have spread over a period approaching thirty years, Byron wrote more than a hundred plays and burlesques, in not one of which can be found a single line that the purest-minded person might not have listened to. Later in his life he went upon the stage, but then only played characters written by himself. His health had long been failing, and it was for some time plainly evident to the few friends he cared to keep about him that his race was nearly run. He grew dreadfully restless, and was constantly changing his home, generally having at least a couple of empty houses on his hands. Within quite a short period we have correspondence dated by him from Eccleston Square, Bedford Square, Clapham Park, and Sutton. One characteristic letter from him will be well placed here:—

"Langton Lodge, Sutton, Surrey,
" June 25, 1882.

"MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

"I ought to have answered your very kind letter before, but upon my word the weather has been so depres-

sing that I have had no 'go' in me, and have not taken up a pen, except under protest and on compulsion, for a month. If the sun would only show up like a man, I should feel like another one, but constant clouds and almost ceaseless winds drive one wretched. Good for the theatres, though. You will both soon enjoy what the papers always madden me by calling a 'well-deserved' or 'well-earned' holiday, and will, I suppose, seek the Engadine again.

"I hope Mrs. Bancroft has escaped her quondam enemy, hay-fever, this year; I always think of her when passing the carts full of it—hay, not fever.

"I have a lot of work on hand, with a most horrible and revolting distaste for doing it, and the very name of a playhouse drives me frantic. A boy came and left a bill announcing Collette as the *Colonel* at the Public Hall here last week. It is lucky I didn't catch him; but the Sutton boys are very agile. I like Collette, and I like the *Colonel*, but there *are* limits. Arthur Sketchley has been here for two or three days. He left yesterday, but the staircase still trembles.* And now, hoping you may both enjoy your rest, and with kindest regards, believe me, yours always sincerely,

"H. J. BYRON."

Poor dear Byron! How handsome he once was! How the hours seemed to fly in his companionship! His very name meant fun. Perhaps no writer ever had a greater power in twisting his language into puns, while his intense appreciation of another's joke was delightful to see.

It would be easy to fill pages with his witticisms; but, without wearying the reader, I feel compelled to recall one or two of his impromptu jokes.

* Of course, in allusion to Sketchley's enormous bulk and weight.

It was at the little Prince of Wales's Theatre that he first suggested his Shakespearian motto for the box book-keeper, "So much for *Booking 'em!*" which afterwards was sent to *Punch*. There was a carpenter in the theatre, by name Cressy, who was such a particularly quiet, steady man, that it was remarked by several members of the company, who were speaking of him in the green-room, when some one said he understood that Cressy at one time had been a drinker, but that he had *taken the pledge* years ago, and became a changed man. Byron observed, "Yes, now he is *Water-Cressy*."

When his play *Dearer than Life* was produced at the Queen's Theatre, in Long Acre, all had gone well with it until the end of the second act, after which there was a very long delay. The audience grew more and more impatient, the band played waltz after waltz, still the curtain was not taken up. Byron was walking uneasily up and down the corridor at the back of the dress circle, chafing over the mishap, and tugging, as he always did when agitated, at one side of his moustache, when a friendly critic, almost as anxious as himself, came up to him, and said, "What, in the name of goodness, are they doing?" "I don't know," moaned Byron.

At this moment the distinct sound of a saw, hard at work behind the scenes, was heard above the uproar: *saw—saw—saw!* "What are they doing now, my dear Byron?" "I think they must be *cutting out the last act!*"

At the time of his disastrous management of the three theatres in Liverpool, an intimate London friend, who met him suddenly in the street, was much struck with his anxious look and altered appearance, and asked sympathetically, "What's the matter, old fellow—*liver?*" "Yes," said Byron, languidly, "*Liverpool!*"

The friend couldn't help laughing heartily, but went on, "Really, now, do take some advice; you're grown so thin. Have you tried cod-liver oil?" Byron replied, "No; but I've tried *Theatre Royal!*"

Two of his jokes, which must have been among the last he ever uttered, I will venture to tell here.

One day, at Clapham, where he died, he received a letter from his coachman, who was at the Bedford Square house, about a sick horse. Byron told a friend of the circumstance in this way:

"They won't let me alone even down here; they will worry me about trifles. This morning my fool of a coachman wrote to tell me that a horse was ill, and wanted to know if he might *give him a ball*. I answered, 'Oh, yes, if you like, give him *a ball*; but *don't ask too many people!*'" Then adding, through his laughter, "I don't suppose the fellow will understand it."

Still later on, he said, "People are very kind to me. I had no idea so many friends remembered me. I thought myself much more forgotten. Lovely flowers and delicious fruit are brought so often; and game, and other things. Last week a dear old friend sent me a hare. I never saw such an animal; the biggest *hare* that ever ran, I think. I really fancied *Kendal* must be inside it!" (in allusion to the partnership management of the St. James's Theatre by Mr. Hare and Mr. Kendal).

Byron's was a happy-go-lucky nature; everything was sure to be right, because he wished it. He was the epitome of good-nature; the most charming companion in the world, often keeping every one about him in fits of laughter, when it was most amusing to see him laugh till he cried at his own jokes, and his laughter was so infectious that, no matter what humour one was in, a grave countenance was impossible. He would always write best

under pressure. If too much time were given him his work would drag lazily along, and before he had half finished it he would be weary of the subject and want to start on something else.

I well remember his saying to me, "I have taken a positive dislike to —," naming a character in the play. "I won't have anything more to say to him. I made his acquaintance six weeks ago, and I am tired to death of him and his long speeches. He is a poor-spirited brute, and he must be locked up; if I meet him again I shall cut him. So will the actor who plays him. So will the critics who see him." The late Mrs. Byron has often amused me with accounts of how her husband would (when pressed for time) write his plays. If walking with him he would suddenly, as an idea struck him, stop, and on the back of an envelope, leaning against a wall or maybe a house-door, submit it at once to paper for fear of forgetting it. She was always glad when a play was finished, for while it was being written nothing else was talked about. In the middle of a conversation he would rush to his desk to jot down a thought which had just occurred to him.

On an occasion when he complained of a cold, and was asked how he caught it, he said that while taking his morning ablution such a capital idea suggested itself to him that he jumped out of his bath to write it down.

In a hurried and most earnest manner he, one day, was jotting down an important inspiration, leaning heavily against the hall-door of a house in the neighbourhood of Doughty Street, where he lived, when suddenly it was opened by an elderly lady, who was coming out. Byron fell into the hall, upsetting the lady, who, in alarm, screamed loudly. Byron laughed to such a degree that he couldn't get up, while Mrs. Byron stood on the doorstep

trying to explain and apologize ; but the lady, when she recovered herself, exclaimed, "Take him away, ma'am, to some asylum!" The more Byron tried to apologize the less able he became to do so, for the sight of the elderly lady, with her bonnet on one side, her bag and umbrella on the mat, and her eyes starting from her head with fright, sent him off into a kind of hysterics. He laughed so much when he told us of this that it was with difficulty we followed the story. We only regretted that he could not introduce the scene into a play ; but he said it would be hard on the Christmas clowns.

J. L. Toole.

When we went to the panorama of the "Siege of Paris," we were annoyed by a strange-looking creature, who persisted in dogging our steps. He wore a slouch hat, the collar of his coat was turned up, and one could not fail to observe his moustache, which seemed to grow upwards in a singular fashion. This man followed us everywhere ; at last, growing more familiar, he bestowed upon us nudges and mutterings, which cast doubts upon his sanity. He presently became more violent in his gesticulations, when his moustache suddenly *fell to the ground*, and revealed the well-known features of—*J. L. Toole*.

A Stock Speech.

In the company of a country theatre was an amusing man, whose festive temperament made him, I fear, a little unreliable in the wonderful dramas, often nautical, which

were a feature on Saturday nights, although very often, I dare say, his own words were as good as the author's. Sometimes, however, he could remember none, and then, with amazing effrontery, took refuge in a stock speech, which he delivered with great solemnity to whoever might be on the stage with him at the time, no matter what the circumstances, the period, or the costume of the play chanced to be. Whether prince or peasant, virtuous or vicious, whether clad in sumptuous raiment or shivering in rags, it was all the same to him, and at the end of his harangue he stalked off the stage, leaving his unhappy comrade to get out of the difficulty as best he could, and bear the brunt of the position. These were the never-changing words, which I recall distinctly: "Go to, thou weariest me. Take this well-filled purse, furnish thyself with richer habiliments, and join me at my mansion straight!" *(Exit.)*

A Story of a Good Son.

For five-and-twenty years Madame Leupold, who was a brilliant pianist, and for some time gave lessons to the daughters of the Prince and Princess of Wales, had visited Pontresina with her son Hugo. Always delicate, she had long been a sufferer from sleeplessness and neuralgic pain; noise and crowds grew gradually more trying as the power of sleep grew less with her; and, although she stayed in the quietest inn, even its share of bustle became unbearable. At last she took up her summer quarters in a humble cottage which belonged to the friendly innkeeper. On a grassy slope above was a favoured spot where, when well enough, the little

lady would sit for hours, under the shade of a tent-umbrella, attended by the devoted son, who had abandoned his profession, and sacrificed his chances in the race of life, to stay by her side. In the year before they arrived together to spend the summer in the same peaceful way, and as towards evening they reached their destination, the mother's eyes sought her favourite resting-place ; she saw to her amazement and regret that a *châlet* had been built upon the nook she knew so well. Horrified, she turned to her son, and exclaimed that Pontresina would never be the same to her again. He consoled her, saying that to-morrow they would seek another corner, and soon prevailed upon her to rest quietly till then. In the morning Hugo went to his mother with the news that he knew all about the little *châlet*—that the owner had not yet taken possession, and that he had the key to show her over it, if she would go with him. With difficulty the son coaxed a reluctant consent from his mother, and tenderly he helped her up the new-made path. Arrived at the porch, he unlocked the door, and they both entered. The invalid's delight and admiration were unbounded at the charming little rooms, with their lovely views, the tiny kitchen, the open piano, and every detail of pretty furniture. All was complete—nothing was wanting but a master. "Oh, Hugo, what a little paradise! How quickly it has all been finished; what taste, what comfort! But we must not envy; you say you know who has done all this—tell me who the owner of it is." He kissed her and said, "You, mother dear."

Silently, with the aid of good friends in the village, had Hugo carried out the building and furnishing of this fairy home, and in his own quiet way he had acted his little play.

The Bright Sun tells the Tale.

At one of our pleasant dinners, Baron Huddleston, who was well and widely known as a *raconteur* with a never-ending budget of professional and other experiences, told a remarkable story of a notorious criminal, whose skill must have been worthy of *Jim the Penman*, which greatly struck us at the time, and vividly recalled the name and fame of our old friend, Wilkie Collins, who would have revelled in its strange details: indeed, it might, perhaps, have added to the many phantoms he once told us often followed him up the staircase as he went to bed, after writing very late. So far as we are able, we will repeat the anecdotes in Baron Huddleston's own words.

In the year 1844, not very long after the now "Last of the Barons" was called to the Bar, a man named Bowen was tried for destroying and defacing a register of baptisms, marriages, and burials. He had, it transpired, devoted himself for years to getting up and, as it now seemed, to manufacturing pedigrees. He was desirous of making out a link which was wanting in the title to some property, and he conceived the notion of forging an entry in an old will to effect his object. For this purpose he went to Oxford, and there applied to see the wills of a certain date, for in those days, strange to say, wills were kept in old wine-hampers in the Bodleian Library. The custodian produced a roll of wills of the particular year inquired for, and, while his attention was cleverly diverted for a moment, the man Bowen abstracted one will from the roll without detection. He took it away, and then, by means of a cunning chemical preparation, removed a

passage in the will, and inserted in its place, in handwriting which marvellously imitated that in which the body of the will was written, a description that was essential to support the link in the chain he was forging. Having done this, he paid a second visit to the Bodleian Library, when he again procured the roll of the year wanted, and replaced in it the will which he had so cleverly altered. The roll was subsequently put back into its original repository without its unsuspecting guardian perceiving what had been done. The next step was to apply in due form for a copy of that particular will, and the clerk to the proper officer prepared in the ordinary way to make it for him; but while engaged in his work he went away to dinner, leaving the copy and the original will open on his desk. During his absence a strong mid-day sun, playing through the window of the office upon the will, brought out the original handwriting, which had been temporarily defaced, and the clerk, on his return, found, to his amazement, passages in the will which certainly had not been there when he was making the copy before he went to dinner.

This, of course, excited immediate suspicion, and the authorities were on the look-out for the man's return when he should come for the copy he had ordered. The curator had some difficulty in bringing to his mind the face of the scoundrel, but he perfectly well recollects that he had in his possession a remarkable-looking carpet-bag, from which he had taken some papers. In the meantime, to further carry out and complete his villainous plan, it became necessary to remove the original evidence of the entry which he had destroyed, and for this purpose Bowen went to Pirton Church, in Worcestershire, where, in the parish register of marriages, etc., was the entry which he wanted to remove.

He got the curate to show him the register, and then,

feigning illness, while the clergyman went to fetch a glass of water for him, he tore out the entry. The curate, as he moved away, fortunately heard the tearing of the paper, and suspecting foul play, turned back just in time to discover what had been done. He cleverly detained the man while the police were sent for. When Bowen was apprehended, and the proofs of his guilt made apparent, he had in his possession at the time the identical carpet-bag which had engaged the attention of the custodian at Oxford, and in it were found pieces of old faded parchment, a small stock of chemical preparations, various coloured inks, pens, etc. Bowen was tried for this offence and convicted before Lord Chief Justice Tindal, and although a point of law was argued before the fifteen judges the conviction was affirmed, and he was sentenced to seven years' transportation.

A Juvenile Band.

There could not be more kindly host and hostess than Baron and Lady Diana Huddleston, whose devotion to her husband and never-wearying care during his serious attacks of illness, cannot fail to excite the admiration of all who have the privilege of their acquaintance. I own to a great affection for "Lady Di," and value her friendship very highly. During a delightful visit to their pretty, cosy, comfortable "Grange" at Ascot, and while walking through the well-kept grounds, an unexpected amusement presented itself, for we heard the sound of a brass band, which seemed quite close. Presently the Baron came along hurriedly and told us that the band of the Bisley Farm School (I

think it was so called), which is composed of poor boys who are boarded, lodged, taught music, and to play various instruments, were performing selections in the neighbourhood. Would we like them to be invited into the grounds, that we might hear them? We were delighted with the idea, and by-and-by in they all marched, headed by their leader and instructor. Meanwhile Lady Diana and my husband had seated themselves in a tiny arbour, so that the boys, not seeing her ladyship take any active part in their reception, concluded that I, who, accompanied by the Baron, met them as they came along, must be their hostess. They played some well-known airs, ably led by their conductor, in a remarkable manner for boys so young. One little fellow amused me particularly; I think he must have had a troublesome cold in his head, for there was a crystal tear at the tip of his nose which remained stationary. No exertion over his clarionet, even when playing *forte*, seemed to disturb its position. This attracted my attention, and I could not help speculating as to its ultimate destination.

When the boys had finished their selection, I made a speech to them, in which I reminded them "how much they were indebted to the friendly and charitable society which had taken such pains to teach them music, thereby providing them with a source of livelihood in the future, and I hoped they would never cease to be grateful to their benefactors." They were all affected by the address, especially the blower of the clarionet, who, being on the point of crying, much imperilled the hitherto firm steadiness of the crystal appendage. My limited audience consisted of the Baron, who stood by me thoroughly enjoying the whole performance, Lady Diana and my husband, who were sitting a little further off, laughing heartily. When I came to the end of my speech I bade

them play "God save the Queen." There was a slight difference of opinion amongst the instruments, but on the whole they got through the anthem very satisfactorily. When this was over I called for "three cheers for the Queen;" the little fellows shouted with all their hearts and lungs. Then I said "One more," to which they responded with the same spirit. "One more," I cried, and just as they were about to break forth again louder than ever, I continued, "*for me.*" They were amused and delighted, and gave me a very warm and hearty cheer, but the effort of shouting had evidently alarmed and disturbed the crystal tear; it had disappeared, but *where* it travelled, far or near, I never ascertained. After this ceremony the Baron and I marched the little musicians into the house to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne," and as I had never seen them before, I thought the air so appropriate! In a long room, tea, cakes, bread and butter, jam, and all sorts of good things had been ordered by the Baron and Lady Diana, and prepared at short notice by their kindly cook. After a splendid tea, and a good look at the birds and animals which the Baron and Lady Diana love to have about them, the boys left the Grange, delighted with their visit, and fully convinced that I was the "lady of the manor."

A Practical Joke by Mr. Bancroft.

I recall some rare fun we had with Meredith Ball, for many years our musical conductor, through my reviving a practical joke, almost as old, no doubt, as the historical "Berners Street hoax." I had a large number of visiting-cards, engraved, bearing the name of "Mr. J. J.

Withers," and for months afterwards, wherever Meredith Ball went, one of these cards would follow him, being left by confederates at his house, or at the theatre by myself, when it was known the caller would not find him. After awhile, the mystery was increased by such pencilled messages as, "So sorry to miss you ; saw our old Liverpool friends yesterday"—"Unlucky again ; will call to-morrow at twelve." Ball, terribly agitated and puzzled, would confide to us at night that this invisible visitor went between him and his rest, for he prided himself on a good memory, and asserted that he had never known any one named Withers in his life. All appointments made, of course, were broken, to be followed by another card with an apology, left by me with our hall-keeper, who played conspirator, and who, in answer to searching inquiries as to Withers's personal appearance, gave a vague description, which still hid my identity. Letters soon followed the cards, regretting the writer's ill-luck at not finding "his old friend ;" great indignation on Ball's part at the expression, which culminated in an agony of despair as to who his tormentor could really be, when Withers said in a postscript, "So you, too, are married, old fellow !" Telegrams followed letters, with the same fun and result ; and, after making an appointment at the Crystall Palace, we followed it up by a telegram from Euston, of course signed Withers, expressing his regret at being hurriedly summoned to Liverpool. The next step, in a day or two's time, was a letter, bearing the Liverpool postmark, from "Mrs. Withers !" explaining that her husband had hurriedly sailed on a business matter for New York, and begged her to express his deep regret at not having yet renewed his old friendship. Ball's agitation at the whole affair, I am afraid, caused us immense amusement. After a long lapse of time—a

year, I think—"J. J. Withers" returned from the States, and again left his card at the theatre and also at Ball's house; the excitement of the unfortunate recipient was once more worked up to fever-heat, and the same sort of fun was again carried on successfully, although broken by a holiday, before Ball, maddened by all sorts of adventures and delays on the part of the ghostly "J. J. Withers," succeeded in meeting "his old friend;" his unsuspecting nature never once being awakened by misgivings. During this holiday, Ball stayed with friends in Leicestershire, to whom he told the story and all its torments. Months afterwards, when he was leading his band in the orchestra of the little Prince of Wales's Theatre one evening, a man came hurriedly to the door, when this conversation took place :

MESSENGER: "Mr. Ball, there's a gentleman at the stage-door who wants to see you, sir."

BALL (fully occupied with a delightful operatic selection): "Go away, I can't speak to you now."

MESSENGER: "Very sorry, sir; but the gent says it's most important, and he must see you."

BALL (taking up his violin, of which he was a master in Costa's band): "Must see me? Go back and ask the gentleman's name."

Ball for a few minutes afterwards was lost in the execution of a dreamy solo which, being out of sight of the audience, he would sometimes play himself, when the man returned and again put his head in at the door.

MESSENGER: "Beg pardon, Mr. Ball."

"BALL: "Well?"

MESSENGER: "The gent says his name is Mr. J. J. Withers, sir."

BALL (almost dropping his fiddle): "What!"

MESSENGER: "Mr. J. J. Withers, sir."

BALL (still fiddling violently) : "Withers!—at last. Don't let him go. I'll be upstairs in a minute. Shut the door—lock him in—anything—but don't let him escape!"

MESSENDER: "All right, sir." (Going away.) "What's up? Who's this Withers, I wonder?"

Ball hurried the time, brought the selection to an end—threw down his violin—rushed upstairs, and arrived, panting, in the hall, to be received with roars of laughter by—his friend from Leicestershire, who had not forgotten Ball's story of the previous summer, and announced himself for a joke as the shadowy "J. J. Withers."

A long, long time afterwards I came across a packet of cards which still bore the name of "J. J. Withers." I thought of all the old fun, and that it was unlikely we could again revive it, so I sealed up the cards in a large envelope and addressed them to the theatre, with my compliments, to Meredith Ball. In the evening, our old friend told me with quite a sorrowful voice, and a really saddened look, that *I had shattered the romance of his life!* I hope he has long since forgiven my ruthless act.

Letters on Our Retirement from Management.

Mr. Burnand wrote, and, of course, in a characteristic vein :—

"DEAR B.,—

"You are a lucky man, and a wise one. A deservedly fortunate pair, and a sagacious couple.

"At *your* age to be able to retire! My! Wouldn't *I* if I could! But *I* shall *never* be able to retire; never

free, never out of harness, until I lie down in the loose-box and am carried off to the knacker's, unless I go to the dogs previously by some shorter and cheaper route.—Yours ever,

“F. C. B.”

In spite of a severe attack of illness these sympathetic lines were penned by their accomplished author :—

“MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

“Under any circumstances I should have read your letter with true interest and pleasure, but at a time of suffering and depression your remembrance of our old friendship is doubly precious and doubly dear to me. With all my heart, I congratulate you and Mrs. Bancroft on retirement from the toils and cares of a career of management, which will be remembered among the noblest traditions of the English stage.—Always truly yours,

“WILKIE COLLINS.”

We received the following from an old friend of many years' standing, and heartily shared his regret that we had not been associated with more of his work :—

“MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

“I congratulate you heartily upon what I am sure is a subject of congratulation to Mrs. Bancroft and yourself, however discomforting your retirement from management must necessarily be to all playgoers. I only regret that I have not had an opportunity of contributing appreciably to the successful result of your twenty years' work.

“With kindest regards to Mrs. Bancroft, I am, very truly yours,

“W. S. GILBERT.”

There could be no more competent critic of the circumstances than our old comrade who wrote this letter :

“ **MY DEAR BANCROFT,—**

“ I am delighted, though not surprised, to learn that you are in the proud position of being able to retire in the prime of your life from our harassing and wearying profession.

“ You have both worked well and loyally, have done the stage the highest service, and well deserve your rest.

“ That the same good fortune which has attached itself to you in your public career may follow you in all things in your private life is the very sincere wish of your old friend and fellow-worker,

“ **JOHN HARE.”**

From a well-known lover of the drama, one to whom we have owed for many years constant acts of kindness, came this warm expression of regret :—

“ **DEAR MR. BANCROFT,—**

“ Lady Londesborough and myself regretted extremely to learn of the determination of Mrs. Bancroft and yourself to retire from management.

“ You have certainly done so much in every sense for your profession (for the difference in the production of pieces, and the rise in the salaries, and consequently in the position of actors and actresses, is mainly owing to you), that you may fairly claim a right to retire ; but we shall all sadly miss you both.

“ We hope that you will remember to keep a box for us on the melancholy occasion of your farewell, to which we shall certainly go, whenever it may be, and whatever engagement we may have.—Believe me, yours very truly,

“ **LONDESBOROUGH.”**

Here is a fragment from a charming letter written by Mr. W. W. Ouless, R.A. :—

“Thank you very much for your kind letter, and the mark of friendship, which I warmly appreciate.

“I hope Mrs. Bancroft and you will have many, many years of happiness, and that we shall long enjoy the advantage of seeing the actor even greater for having thrown off the care of management.”

Mr. J. C. Parkinson’s words bespeak his true friendship for us :—

“I have none of the mixed feeling that will animate those who are naturally pained at losing so much out of their side of your lives. *Mine* is unqualified rejoicing at your timely wisdom. As one of the public, I shall not lose you altogether as artists, and as private friends (by far my strongest part) I hope to be drawn closer to you both in a thousand ways. The wisdom of it! The wisdom of it! If I were absolute fairy monarch, and could decree for you, I would have fixed matters beyond the possibility of retreat precisely as you have fixed them for yourselves.”

Mr. Pinero sent us the following generous and valued words :—

“It is my opinion, expressed here as it is elsewhere, that the present advanced condition of the English stage—throwing as it does a clear, natural light upon the manners and life of people, where a few years ago there was nothing but mouthing and tinsel—is due to the crusade begun by Mrs. Bancroft and yourself in your little Prince of Wales’s Theatre. When the history of the stage and its progress is adequately and faithfully

written, Mrs. Bancroft's name and your own must be recorded with honour and gratitude."

It was with great pleasure that we read the following from Mr. B. C. Stephenson ("Bolton Rowe") :—

"I cannot help telling you how much I regret to hear that Mrs. Bancroft and yourself have made up your minds to retire from management.

"If any two human beings ever deserved repose, certainly you do, and it must be a great satisfaction to be able to claim it at the time when the tide of your success is at its highest.

"Since you took the Prince of Wales's Theatre in hand, the English stage has altered much, and no one has had more to do with its alteration and improvement than yourselves. There is scarcely a theatre in London that does not show the mark of your work, and seldom does a good performance take place without the help of some one who has passed his apprenticeship under your management."

That distinguished dramatic critic, Mr. Moy Thomas, with whom we have only enjoyed a bare acquaintance, wrote thus :—

"The influence of your reign, both at the Prince of Wales's and at the Haymarket, will remain and grow. It is easy, as Tennyson says, to sow when you have the seed. Others have done something towards the remarkable revival of dramatic art in our days, but there is all the difference in the world between originating and following.

"As to Mrs. Bancroft, who is there who will not wish to her, and all dear to her, a long life of happy leisure, and many a pleasant evening in *front* of the curtain?"

The congratulations of our old friend Mr. Edmund Yates:—

“MY DEAR B.,—

“I am heartily delighted at the news which I received from you ten minutes ago, and I most warmly congratulate you both on your sensible decision.

“Few persons who have not actually been ‘in the profession’ could know so well as I do what that decision means. The triumphs, the applause, the delights of conquering difficulties and converting them into glories, the top-tree position striven for so sedulously, earned with such labour and pains—all these have to be relinquished. But, oh ! the exquisite joy of being your own master, of snapping your fingers at the public, careless whether they come or stay away, of being wholly independent of heat or ‘Healtheries,’ or anybody’s grim patronage !

“To our thinking you have decided most wisely, and we wish you heartiest and happiest enjoyment of your coming enfranchisement.—Always both of yours,

“E. Y.”

“DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—

“I have observed your career from its beginning, and can bear testimony to the enormous improvement you have effected on the English stage.

“You were the first to teach the school of Nature, and not only by your own bright impersonations, but also by your influence over all those with whom you were brought in contact, to prove that English Art is second to none.

“Following in your footsteps, and emulous of your achievements, many have attained fame and fortune. But it is my firm belief that to you, and to you especially, is to be attributed the great and successful development of our Modern Drama.—Sincerely yours,

“ALGERNON BORTHWICK.”

“DEAR MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT,—

“Are you too tired of being told how much everybody admires and loves you both? All I can say is, that I heartily wish I had been privileged to begin feeling twenty years ago what I feel now, and I shall make myself what amends are in my power by feeling as long as I live.

“All happiness to you, [from yours, gratefully and affectionately ever,

“ROBERT BROWNING.”

“MY DEAR BANCROFT,—

“You and your wife will be in receipt of numberless letters of admiration and sympathetic farewell. Let me and mine add *our* mite, and congratulate you both most warmly on the demonstration of last night.

“I myself am a pretty old playgoer, dating from “old Dowton”—whom I well knew on the “Kent circuit” about 1840—the elder Farren, Mrs. Glover, etc., and in bygone days never missed any event of genuine interest. Among the most prominent of such occasions was the farewell of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, on Monday August 29, 1859. (I have my stall ticket still by me.) The *Times* spoke of it as ‘one of the most imposing ovations ever seen within the walls of a theatre,’ and it was; last evening was another, but there was this difference—the thoroughly representative character of last night’s audience was *never*, in my experience, equalled. Therein shines the true public feeling, all up and down the ladder, towards you both, and on this Lady Monckton and myself so heartily and sympathetically congratulate you.—With kindest wishes, I am, your old friend,

“JOHN B. MONCKTON.”

“MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—

“Will you allow me to be one of the crowd who will assemble on the night of the 20th to express their regret at your retirement from management, *for regret will be the general feeling?*”

“My career was *ended* when yours *began*.

“With kindest regards to Mr. Bancroft and yourself, believe me, yours sincerely,

“MARY ANNE KEELEY.”

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—

“I congratulate you on the brilliant termination of an honourable career of management. How strange are the phases of life! Little did I think on the occasion of my first seeing you in Liverpool (when you acted in the *Woman in Mauve*) that I should see you in the exceptionally proud position you stood in last Monday; and still less that I should be classed amongst your friends, permitted to add my quota to the goodwill and admiration you were greeted with.

“My kindest regards and best wishes to you both, my dear Bancroft, and believe me, yours sincerely,

“CHAS. WYNDHAM.”

“DEAR MADAM,—

“How many of your most respectful admirers were unable to be present at your farewell last night you will never know; but many of us absent in body were yet present in spirit. You have helped the humble writer of this letter in so many ways, and not least in having cleared away the mists of prejudice and ignorance which a puritanical education had raised up.

“It has been by such good work as yours and your

husband's that the Drama has risen to its proper position, and been ennobled even in the eyes of those brought up to despise and condemn it.—Yours truly,

“A LOVER OF THE ENGADINE.”

“Which of all My Parts did I Like Best?”

It may have interest if I tell the reader, having ceased playing them for ever, which, of all the parts Tom Robertson wrote for me, I liked the best. In this hope I will classify my preference in rotation. First, Naomi Tighe, in *School*. Second, Polly Eccles, in *Caste*. Third, Cecilia Dunscombe, in *M.P.* Fourth, Mary Netley, in *Ours*. Fifth, Rosie Fanquehere, in *Play*. Many lovers of the old plays will, perhaps, be surprised at my preference, as I am under the impression that Polly Eccles may be thought to have been my favourite character. No, it was not. I love Polly for the innate fine qualities of her nature; her devotion to her dissolute, worthless father; her filial desire to screen the worst side of his nature (if there could be a worse) by trying to make him appear a little better in the estimation of others. Her love for her sister; her real goodness under a rough exterior; the under-current of mischief and keen appreciation of humour. All these genuine qualities appealed to me largely, and I hope I understood them, otherwise I do not think I could have made the impression in the part which I am told I did. I thoroughly enjoyed the boundless love of fun, the brisk gaiety of Polly's happy nature, and I felt acutely the pathos of her serious scenes.

The character is very dramatic in parts, and requires

all the nervous acting I could bring to bear upon it. The last act of *Caste* is the longest I ever appeared in, and I believe one of the longest in the whole range of the Drama, for it often played nearly an hour and a half, and Polly is but seldom off the stage throughout it. Almost every word she has to say is a pearl, so to speak, and affects the audience more or less. Hers is always a welcome presence, for every one loves Polly: I am naturally very proud of my success in the part, and feel happy in all that is now left to me—the remembrance of it. Success *must* bring pleasure, and “labour’s light as ease when with cheerfulness ’tis done;” and although Polly is not my favourite character, still I love her for her strange mixture of boisterous fun, tenderness, and affection. The sudden transitions, too, from broad comic humour to deep feeling pleased me, and my heart was therefore in my work. In the situation where George D’Alroy suddenly returns from India when he is thought to be dead, I felt the reality of the scene so thoroughly that I cried every night when acting it. Polly Eccles, as a work of art, did me more credit than all the others, and doubtless, as an artistic effort, stands first in the rank, for she is a difficult part to play: the range of feeling must be very wide to fully reproduce the intentions of the author. *Caste* is assuredly Tom Robertson’s *chef-d’œuvre*, and one of the cleverest plays written in my time. Well, then, why, in the face of all this, was not Polly Eccles my favourite part?

I fear I can only give a woman’s reason, and say that “it was not”: I certainly felt happier when I was playing Naomi Tighe—dear “Nummy!” I affectionately hug the memory of “Nummy,” and wear her in my “heart of hearts” as freshly as though I were still representing her. The artless simplicity and sunny

nature of "Nummy," the utter ignorance of the existence of any sadness in the whole world, except what school discipline enforces, her fearless and open avowal of her romantic adoration for Jack Poyntz, make her a lovable thing. She is one big slice of sunshine, and she had no drunken father! It was a delight to act Naomi Tighe; she is as fresh as country butter, and every word she utters breathes the unladen atmosphere of a bright green spot "far from the madding crowd."

Speaking of "Nummy" reminds me of our early rehearsals of *School*. One morning, we were going through the scene where Lord Beaufoy, having found a tiny shoe which had slipped from Bella's foot as she ran away alarmed at a galloping bull, but which he carefully hides, asks the girls "if they have lost anything." They both reflect and look about, but cannot imagine what it can be, as nothing seems missing. This particular morning, so imbued and engrossed was I in the situation, that while wondering what I could have lost, I instinctively and in alarm suddenly put my hand to my chignon with a look of terror, and remained so for a second. This purely impulsive action so amused and impressed Tom Robertson that he begged me to do it at night. I did so, and I shall never forget the burst of laughter and applause which greeted its effect. Needless to add, I repeated it every night until further notice, and the "business" was written by Robertson in his book.

Cecilia Dunscombe in *M.P.* was a part I like immensely, and I always felt sorry not to have had a chance of playing her again. She was written as a type of a "girl of the period," who, if not carefully handled, might on the stage become offensive. There are many temptations in a part of this calibre to enlarge upon the eccentricities of a "good fellow" sort of woman. I was careful to pre-

serve all the points the author intended when he wrote the play ; but I worked to make the audience like her, by giving an amusing, but, at the same time, a feminine, rendering of her character. A leading critic was good enough to say of this performance : "The perfect command of appropriate gesture and movement ; the subtler play of feature ; the power to indicate, in spite of an exterior of frivolity and mirth, a deeper and more earnest nature—these are things which on our stage are unhappily given but to the few."

I thoroughly enjoyed the last act. Robertson always gave me a *carte blanche* to do what I liked with the parts he wrote for me, and often said "he knew full well that he could trust to my good taste and discretion." I think my instincts never misguided me. When poor Tom, who was then fading fast, saw *M.P.*, he said to me, "I must write more parts for you, Marie ; it does me good, for I can see you as I put the words on paper!" He never wrote another. I have an affection for Cecilia Dunscombe, and one reason may be that this was the last part I ever created for the author, although he would often, during his sad illness, speak hopefully of the three plays he had made up his mind to write for us to succeed one another, which were to be called, in turn, *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*—"such good parts for you, Marie," he would say. It made me wretched indeed to hear him talk in that way when I knew how fatal was his malady.

Mary Netley is not a good part to read in the book, and had not Tom Robertson asked me to "build it up," she would have fallen comparatively flat upon the audience. When he had finished reading the piece to us, he begged me to do all I could in the scene which concerned me in the last act, for somehow he felt unable to make Mary as prominent as he wished, so at the rehearsals I set to

work, and invented business and dialogue, which, happily, met with his approval ; he declared I greatly helped the act, which was not only improbable, but in parts very weak. The audience laughed at the fun, and forgave the rest. I must confess that I often felt a little ashamed of the expedients I was obliged to adopt, and was fully conscious that it was not art, only fun and frolic, where we pretended to be soldiers going through our exercises. The audience thoroughly enjoyed it, however ; for although it was improbable, it was harmless and amusing. I remember with what care I made the famous roley-poley pudding every night during the first run of *Ours*. This pudding was eagerly waited for by a little family of poor children—I made a very big one and filled it with jam. *Ours* was, in spite of its weak points in the last act, a great favourite with the public, and never failed to be our good friend whenever we called upon it to help us, and so, as a true friend, it will be a treasure in “my memory locked.”

Rosie Fanquehere in *Play* was a slenderly-written part, as, indeed, was the whole comedy, which depended greatly upon the acting, it being so slight in plot, and incident, and the weakest, in every sense, of Robertson’s works. There was a pretty moment in the first act, where I had to describe my sensations when drowning ; this was written in very simple, unaffected language : the speech never failed to touch me as I delivered it, and the audience also were often moved to tears. I had an effective scene in the ruins of the Alte Schloss with poor Montague, who played Frank Price charmingly. It was one of the prettiest of love-scenes. We sang a duet, partly in English, partly in German. I often look at a picture of the scene on a copy of the music, and note, how good the likenesses must have been then. But the

piece was too slender to endure a revival, so after the first run poor Rosie disappeared. This part is the last in my list because she was the least attractive to me. But all the plays were my good friends, and I love them, and thank them. Good-bye, "Nummy" (dear "Nummy!"), Polly, Cecilia, Mary, and Rosie; I shall, while memory lasts, cherish and remember you with grateful thoughts. I kiss my hands to you all, my dear companions and playmates. In every beat of my heart there is a corner kept for you. Often, when I am alone, I think of you, and live again in the sweet and joyous words we spoke together. Good-bye, good-bye; as I write my farewell to you, every letter holds a tear.

Our Retirement from Management on July 20th, 1885.

Needless to say, the following characteristic note was hailed with the heartiest of welcomes:—

“Garrick Club, June 9, 1885.

“**MY DEAR BANCROFT,—**

“I need scarcely tell you what great pleasure it will give me to do something on the occasion of your retirement from management: play the audience in or out; as early as you choose, or as late; or even, on such an interesting evening, turn up the gas; go round with the apples, oranges, etc.; ring up the curtain; clear the stage, or anything! With all kind messages to your dear wife, sincerely yours,

“**J. L. TOOLE.**”

The following letter, written by me, describes a few more incidents:—

“We both deeply regretted that at the last moment you were prevented from being present at our *farewell!* Of

course you have read the accounts, and the long leading articles in the newspapers ; but no written description can give you an adequate idea of the whole scene from the rise of the curtain until its final fall, which closed, for ever, our career as managers. Many weeks before the, to us, memorable night arrived, I felt as though a heavy weight were tugging at my heart. Those two relentless words, 'good-bye,' haunted me, wherever I went, whatever I did. They were the last visions in my mind when going to sleep, and they rose up in big letters on my awaking. You will never know, and I can never explain to you, what a sad load it has been to carry in my thoughts. Was I not going to bid adieu to my dear public, my good faithful friends who helped me to launch the little ship with the three lucky plumes at its figure-head (have they not been lucky to me ?), and who encouraged me on and on until I had completed twenty long voyages. Some of our friends have reproached us for throwing down the reins so soon ; but we feel that we have done all we can for our art (if we stayed too long it might be forgotten *how much* we have done). We have achieved all we desire for ourselves, and we don't wish to linger so long upon the scene as to outlive, perhaps, the liking of the public. We have been successful beyond our wildest hopes, but not without very hard work, and now we lay down our arms that they may be taken up by others who are 'eager for the fray.'

"The beautiful theatre presented a striking appearance. The royal box was occupied by the Prince and Princess of Wales and the three young princesses ; the box on the opposite side by the Prince and Princess Christian, with whom were Mr. and Mrs. (now Sir Francis and Lady) Jeune. The stalls were taken away, and in their stead were small chairs—making the house look as closely

packed as a box of figs or sardines. It almost seemed as if everybody of distinction was squeezed into the building, and it was with a feeling of real pride that I looked upon the assembly which had come to do us so much honour. The great desire to be present was proof to us of high esteem and an acknowledgment of the good work we hope we have accomplished. It was, indeed, a moment to live for, to labour for. The theatre looked so gay and bright, like one huge bouquet set with brilliants. There was no feeling, I am sure, amongst that wonderful audience but of goodwill, and the hearts of all seemed to throb with one big beat, and that was for us.

“How I managed to dress for my part, I know not. I can only remember floral offerings of every conceivable design being brought to me, until there were so many that they had to be taken to a larger room. When I walked on to the stage in the second act of *Masks and Faces*, amongst Ernest Vane’s other guests, my reception was so overpowering, and the ‘Good-bye’ in my throat so big, that I nearly gave way. Some one (I think it was Mr. Barrymore) whispered to me, ‘Bear up,’ and that brought me to myself. You know how nervous and sensitive I am, but I gathered up all the strength at my command, and conquered the almost uncontrollable desire to cry. During the last act, when you know poor ‘Peg’ is sorely tried, and has so many different emotions to portray, it was with the greatest difficulty I managed to keep up until the end. But when the moment came to speak that beautiful ‘farewell’ to Mabel Vane, every word seemed so appropriate, fitting in so strangely to the occasion, that I could fight against my emotions no longer; the tears that had been waiting for the gates to open came freely to my eyes, and I fairly broke down. Mr. Irving delivered

the 'Good-bye' address with deep feeling; and dear little Toole, in his own quaint fashion, spoke of us both with affection.

"After this came Mr. Bancroft's 'Farewell.' How he got through it as he did is a marvel to me, for he was painfully agitated. The stage was beautifully decorated with masses of flowers by several ladies, who kindly offered to do the duty, and a path was formed right down to the footlights, with a border of bouquets on each side, through which we both walked when we went on to make our final bow. The curtain was raised many times, and the sight of the upstanding audience cheering and waving their handkerchiefs was something to remember. The sound of their voices, the enthusiasm, the deafening applause, and 'Auld Lang Syne' played by the band, was all so bewildering to my senses, that I felt dazed and as in a dream.

"When all this was over the Princess of Wales sent for me, and after gracious words of sympathy, presented me with a bouquet which she was carrying. You may imagine how deeply all this affected me. Many dear friends came round to speak pleasant words to me afterwards, and I was urged to go to a party given by Mr. Alfred de Rothschild, to which he had kindly invited us. I was advised that it would put my thoughts for a time into another groove, and would help me to a better night's rest than if I went immediately home after the tension and excitement I had gone through. We remained in the theatre some time before starting, but the crowd which had assembled in order to see us leave, completely blocking the whole of Suffolk Street, still waited, and as we passed through to the carriage, those who were near enough pressed forward to shake hands with us, while expressions of regret and good wishes were called out to us on every

side. As the carriage went slowly through the crowd, hands were thrust in, and grasping mine, the people shouted, 'It mustn't be good-bye!' 'Don't go away!' 'Stay with your friends!'

"At Mr. de Rothschild's beautiful house we again met the Prince of Wales, who talked with us for a long time in the most flattering way. We saw many people who had been at the theatre, Lord Granville being particularly kind in echoing remarks contained in a letter he wrote a few days ago. When at last we reached home, I threw on a dressing-gown, and had a long think and a good cry. After all the noise, excitement, and suppressed emotion, having been, as it were, 'the observed of all observers,' I sat alone in the silence of the night reflecting, looking back through that long vista of the past, with its hard work, many triumphs, and bold achievements. I thought of my early struggles in childhood and girlhood—which made the water very rough for me to wade—but now that I am safely landed, I cannot help looking sadly back upon the stormy sea through which I had to pass. My sleep that night was fitful, as you may well believe, and in the morning when I tried to speak I found that my voice had left me; the vocal cord had collapsed, and the reaction was almost as bad as the nervous agitation which had caused it.

"I have received many charming letters, amongst them being one from Lady Salisbury, and another from Lady Iddesleigh—letters that I shall treasure very much; in the future I shall read them many a time, and picture in my memory that eventful night.

"Well, the bouquets were so numerous that they had to be sent home on the following day in a van, and when they arrived they could not all be accommodated inside the house, so they were placed in the balcony, which soon

was filled. When the van arrived, a small crowd of people soon collected, and the remarks from some of them, which were afterwards repeated to me, were most amusing. 'What's all this mean?' said one. 'It's either a weddin' or a funeral,' was the reply. 'Who lives there?' 'Oh! I know why: it's the Bancroft's 'ouse; they've jist 'ad a heap of money left them by a relation wot insists on their leavin' the stage!' 'Oh, then all this is for a party!' 'It's more like a royal mausoleum!'

"The lovely flowers are fading fast, and yesterday I found that one of the huge offerings had been sent to me in a handsome silver bowl.

"I am now counting the hours to our start for my beloved Engadine; at the Maloja Hotel, with the care of its most kind and excellent manager, Herr Walther, and the lovely, health-giving surroundings, I shall find the rest which I need this time more than ever. I feel so tired, so sleepy, that when I get there I shall lie down, look at my old friends the mountains, which divide me from the hurly-burly through which I have passed on the other side of them, and not wish to get up again for days. Good-bye—no, no! *au revoir* to you, dear. Think of me this time next week, when I would not change places with you, much as I like you."

A Tribute from Mr. Bancroft.

Perhaps this tribute from my husband I may be permitted to add here:—

"Mrs. Bancroft from the beginning placed perfect confidence in my judgment, not only with regard to the business side of our work, but in the choice of plays, and

accepted my opinion in nearly all important matters, even when, unfortunately, it chanced to be at variance with her own. Whenever I was at fault, the least I have to say is that she stood more firmly than ever by my side, and never allowed her faith in me to be shaken by an occasional mistake. Indeed, I can most truly add that throughout our managerial career she was in all matters my strongest help, ever modest in success, ever full of courage to meet a reverse, and ever faithful in sorrow or in joy. She also shared the belief with me that considerations as to what parts we should play ourselves were never to bias our judgment in the refusal or acceptance of plays. In this spirit Mrs. Bancroft cheerfully sank her own importance as an actress on many occasions, and frequently to some detriment. She often cheerfully played second parts to Madame Modjeska, Miss Ellen Terry, Mrs. John Wood, Mrs. Bernard-Beere, and Mrs. Kendal.

“It seems to me that this simple record best speaks the utter absence from her nature of such a feeling as professional jealousy. The value of such self-abnegation I cannot over-estimate, as without it we should never have produced some of our most successful plays.

“Mrs. Bancroft would not, I think, like me to say more, but it is a subject on which it would be impossible for me to say less.”

“A Look at the Old 'ouse.”

Whenever opportunity offers, I walk through Tottenham Street to have a look at the dear old Prince of Wales's Theatre. I gaze with mingled feelings at the now dingy building, and think of the wonderful triumphs

we achieved there. It is a poor, broken-down place now, but while a brick of it remains I shall cling to the memory of the house that was my stepping-stone to fortune, and in which I passed the happiest years of my life. I often grieve to see it so neglected and forsaken, and the past seems to me like a strange dream.

One day I had occasion to visit Messrs. Maple's great house in the Tottenham Court Road, and I intended to walk home from there in order to have another peep at the dear old theatre, but as I left the shop it began to rain, and I called a hansom. After giving the cabman his directions, I requested him to drive through Tottenham Street. He evidently recognized me, and with a tinge of pathos in his voice, and sympathy in his face, he asked, "To have a look at the old 'ouse, ma'am?" I was touched by the kindly thought, and answered, "Yes, if you please." He drove quickly until we approached the theatre, and then slackened his speed to church pace, so that I might have a good look at it. That man had a tender heart.

A Mad Admirer.

A little romance occurred to me early in my London life which resulted, I am sorry to say, in a tragic ending. I was pestered by some stupid letters full of nonsensical admiration. Their frequency at last became so annoying, the notes being accompanied by flowers with silly requests that I would wear them, that I consulted Mr. Compton, who was one of the Haymarket company, how best to put a stop to the nuisance. In his quaint way he said, "Some love-sick boy! but as the letters are addressed to the 'Sweetest God of Love in the world,' send them on to

Buckstone ! As for the flowers, give them to me, I'll wear them." He attached the bouquet to his hat, and strutted about the stage, much to my amusement, dressed as the old Pedagogue, in which he was inimitably droll. In the last scene he placed the little note that was sent with the flowers between the white feather wings which I wore as Cupid ; and when I had to draw an arrow from my quiver in the business of the scene, the *billet-doux* fell to the ground, much to my confusion. Compton laughed and said, when the piece was ever, "I don't think our love-sick friend will trouble us any further." The next night, however, he received a letter, saying that if he only knew the misery he was causing to a poor harmless fellow he never would have been guilty of such an unkindness. Compton inquired what sort of man brought the letter. The hall-porter answered, "Not a man at all, sir—it was a boy." Upon which Compton said to me, "This is only a poor little schoolboy, after all ; here are some more roses which he has sent, and begs of you to wear. Do so, my dear, to assure him that you are not offended, and the poor little fellow will go back to school rejoicing, and you will be troubled by him no more ;" but nothing further occurred for quite two weeks, and I hoped with Compton that my youthful admirer had disappeared. One night, however, after the performance, a most alarming letter arrived, saying that having once worn the flowers he had sent me, I had proved that the writer could not be altogether indifferent to me ; adding, "I shall be here again to-morrow night, and if you do not then wear the bouquets I shall send you, I shall wait outside the stage-door, and as you pass me in your cab, I shall shoot you dead." My mother decided to go with me to the theatre the next night. We both consulted Mr. Compton, and he advised us to leave by the front

entrance instead of the stage-door, saying that he would have the boy watched, and, if armed, give him in charge. He laughingly added, "He is a bloodthirsty young ruffian, and his people must be communicated with at once. I little thought such trouble would come of my advice to you to wear the stupid fellow's flowers; but I expect, after a sound thrashing and a threat to put him into prison, he will disappear." We went out the front way, and arrived home safely. On the next day we were told that no such person had been seen in Suffolk Street, and we began to think the whole affair was a hoax.

Shortly afterwards, however, an elderly lady called at our lodgings and asked if she could see me; my mother and I received her. She looked at me very hard, and said, "I wish I could spare you the sad story I have to tell. You have lately been much annoyed by receiving letters and flowers from a young man who has constantly been to the Haymarket Theatre." I replied, "Yes, I have indeed; but I was under the impression that he was merely a boy." She continued, "No, he is twenty-one years of age, and my son. I am a widow. For some time I have noticed a strangeness in his manner. He would pace up and down his room at night talking to himself, and never seemed to sleep. I became very uneasy, and often asked him what was the matter, but he would never reply. A week ago, while he was out, I went to his room to see if I could find a clue to all this mystery. I saw a letter addressed to you, in which he threatened to do you harm if you did not wear the flowers he intended to send you. The following evening I had him detained at home, and the whole night he was raving. I am almost broken-hearted. I have consulted doctors, and my poor son is pronounced insane. He has

promised that if he can hear from your own lips that you can never care for him, he will rest content and never trouble you again. Now, my dear young lady, will you grant him an interview, and in the presence of his doctor let him hear you say you cannot accept his addresses, and I shall be truly grateful." Then, turning to my mother, she said, "I appeal to you as a mother. I am worn out with anxiety. I implore you to help me in this matter." My mother replied, "Of course, if we can be assured that this painful business will end here, I will consent."

The poor lady seemed quite grateful, and after fixing a day and hour for the interview she left.

The day arrived, and at the appointed time came a loud knock. Presently the room door was opened, and in walked the poor lady, then a gentleman who, I was informed, was a "mad" doctor, followed by a pale, fair-haired young man, with a very freckled face, and odd, light-blue eyes, which he fixed on me the moment he entered the room, and never took them away until he left the house. After him came a strange-looking man, who I distinctly remember had lost a thumb, and who was told by the doctor to sit outside the room until he was wanted. It would be very difficult for me to describe my feelings and my mother's looks; I only know that I was terribly frightened.

After a short, painful interval, the doctor spoke. "Miss Wilton, you have for some few weeks received letters and bouquets from Mr —?" "Yes." "You were requested in these notes to wear the flowers during the evening?" "Yes." "Well, one evening you did wear them?" "Yes, because a very touching letter was written to request me to do so to show that I was not offended with the sender, and that he then would never trouble me again." The doctor went

on: "After that you received a threatening letter from him?" "Yes; and it alarmed me very much." I related the details, when the poor fellow muttered, "I could not injure that which I loved!" My mother urged that the interview must come to an end, and the doctor then said, "Well, Miss Wilton, you are aware that Mr. — has promised that if he can hear from your own lips that you cannot care for him, he will never trouble you more. He will keep his word, I know. All you have to do is to answer that question, and then we will leave you, asking you to forgive us for this intrusion; and pray believe that I am extremely sorry you should have suffered so much annoyance.

I paused for a second; I looked at the young man's anxious face, and saw his eyes still fixed upon me with a look of intense sorrow and suffering. I then said, "I can never care for this gentleman, and I ask him to trouble me no further." The doctor turned to him and said, "You hear?" There was then a general movement. The poor fellow came up to me, looked at me with a wild stare, and said, "Good-bye." He turned round, walked to the door, over which hung my portrait, gave a sort of stifled scream, rushed hurriedly from the room and past the man outside, who immediately ran after him as fast as his legs would take him. My mad admirer went so quickly that he pushed against the servant who was going to open the street-door for them, sent her sprawling on the floor, and ran towards Waterloo Bridge, with the man after him, the doctor after the man, and the poor old lady after the doctor. The scene I shall never forget. The carriage they came in followed, so they made altogether a very extraordinary procession. Some short time after we heard from Mrs. — that her son had been placed in an asylum. After another lapse of time we

heard again that, as he was pronounced much better, he had been sent for a voyage to Australia with an attendant; and a few months later we were much startled and pained to hear that during the voyage he had, while his attendant was occupied for a moment in speaking to another passenger, jumped overboard and was drowned. We were all very sorry to hear such sad news of the poor fellow, for we could not help feeling interested in him. I had heard that there had been insanity in his family, and I often wondered whether his inherent madness or *my beauty* (!) was the cause of this sad episode. After a little consideration, and several references to my looking-glass, I concluded that it must have been the former.

The Pearl Necklace.

The most important episode of a romance in my life occurred at Bristol, although the sequel did not really happen until later on, when I was acting at the Strand Theatre. Attractions must have been at a very low ebb, when the manager of a small country theatre where I was acting soon after I left Manchester conceived the idea of my playing Juliet. I am thankful that such things never occur now. The manager explained to the public that the Italian Juliet was but little older than I, and that in southern climes girls were marriageable at a very early age.

I was a pale, thin, delicate-looking child, and tall for my age. Any one thought at that time that I should, if I lived, be a remarkably fine woman; but since playing Juliet on that memorable first occasion I have not grown an inch, and sometimes think that my tragic efforts gave as great a shock to my system as to my audience.

Often on my way to and from our rehearsals, when I had time to loiter, I stopped at a window in the little High Street, and longingly looked at a necklace of pearl beads, marked five shillings—a fortune to me then. I saved until I had half a crown, and then tried to induce the shopman to let me have it for that price; but I failed. My father promised to buy me the treasure if I would be very good, and study Juliet. How readily I said, “Yes;” for the labour of learning the words, and being taught by my mother how to speak them, seemed light indeed compared with the joy of possessing those little pearl beads.

The night arrived for the “great dramatic event” (*vide* advertisements). My mother could scarcely dress me, her hands trembled so. I could not help wondering why she should be so anxious. I was not. I was of that happy age that knows no responsibility. I had on a pretty white dress, trimmed with narrow silver lace, my hair hanging in large waves over my shoulders; and best adornment of all was my beautiful pearl necklace. Oh! how every one would envy me those beads!

All went well until the fourth act, when in throwing my head back to drink the poison, my long train, which I wore for the first time in my life, and which had been a great anxiety to me all through the play, got entangled in my feet; and, in the effort to save myself from falling, my necklace gave way, and the beads were scattered about in all directions. I looked scared for a moment; but when I fully realized that it was broken, I fell to crying so bitterly that I thought my heart would break too. I sank on to the couch, sobbing piteously. The audience thought this a good piece of acting, and gave me great applause.

In the greatest grief, and with stifled sobs, I went through the last act. When I fell on Romeo’s body there was great applause; but in the middle of Friar Laurence’s

last speech, I saw some of my beads lying close to his feet. His treading upon them seemed imminent; so, forgetting that I was supposed to be dead, I got up and rescued them, and then lay down again. Of course, the rest of Friar Laurence's speech was not heard, and the curtain fell amidst loud laughter. I had a good scolding from father, mother, and manager, who hoped that if I ever again played Juliet I should think more of the part than of the ornaments.

As we were leaving the theatre, my eyes swollen from crying over the injured necklace, a gentleman who had witnessed the performance and the scene stepped up to us, and said, "I hope you will pardon me for speaking to you; my name is Captain —. Let me tell you how much I have been impressed by your little daughter's acting as Juliet; it really was, for one so young, very remarkable. Take care of her, sir; there is a bright career before her. Good-night. Good-night, little one!" He shook my hand, and asked me if I would give him the remnant of my broken necklace, which I had so carefully rescued from destruction. I trembled at the thought of parting with it; but my mother whispered to me, "I am going to buy you another." So I gave it. On our way home we talked of nothing else—my father dwelling on the criticism, and I on the final disappearance of my necklace.

For many and many a night I quite looked for my "prophet"; but he had gone as mysteriously as he came. Often on our way home had I said, "We have never seen that kind gentleman since; I seem to miss him somehow. Will his words ever come true, I wonder?"

Some time after, at Bristol, and as I was leaving the theatre with my mother, who should step up to us but my "prophet." We both recognized him at once. I was

delighted ; but my mother feared that his admiration of me as a child *might* grow into something more serious, and she therefore did not receive him with that warmth she otherwise might have done. He said, " Well, little one, you see I was right ; you are going up the ladder step by step. Mark my words, the next one will be London."

My heart jumped at the sight of this man ; there was a kind of mystery about him. He seemed to be mixed up with my life somehow ; and whatever part of importance I played, I always thought of him and his kind words. He showed me the string of pearls, and said, " You see how I have treasured these. I don't intend to part with them. I shall never give them back to you unless you ask me for them." How different were my feelings for those pearls now ! It seemed like taking away my heart when he first asked me for them ; and now, unknown to myself, he *had* taken it away.

Every night during his short stay he sat in a corner of the dress circle, and at the end of the play would show me the pearl beads. He would wait sometimes outside the stage-door, just to press my hand and say, " Good-night, little one." He had not time to say more, for my mother used to sit at the window of our lodgings, which were opposite, to see me come home.

I was now in love for the very first time in my life. How everything else in the whole world suddenly dwindled into nothing ! Father, mother, sisters, theatres, acting—all seemed to be shut out by a curtain, and only one being was in view. There was nothing in this man to attract a girl of my age. He was not young, not what is called good-looking, and was poor ; but what was this to me ? All the nicest people were poor, and I didn't care. But I had never had an opportunity of telling him all this, for my mother had declined to encourage his visits ;

and so he kept away, and never tried to see me, except for one moment to say, "Good night."

One night I received a note from him, saying, "Good-bye. I wonder if we shall ever meet again. I shall never part with your pearls. I love you, little one. I wish you loved me; but it is better for you that you should not." This was the first opportunity he had ever given me of telling him how much I loved him, and I was resolved to take it.

I gave the note to my mother, and implored her to let me see him. She refused, saying I was a silly girl. I fancy she said a fool; but I was too agitated to remember.

"How can you think seriously of such a mysterious person?" Mysterious! she would not give him a chance of being anything else. "Surely," she continued, "you cannot wish to destroy all your professional prospects! Let me hear no more of this nonsense! Thank goodness he is gone, and you will forget him in a few days."

"Forget him! and in a few days! Oh, mother!" I knew his address in Ireland; and, after vainly trying to follow my mother's counsel, I wrote to him, saying that I loved him more than anything else in the world, and that if he really cared for me as much, I would run away and go to him; that if I did not marry him, I would marry no one else; that I could not study; that I could do nothing but think of him. He replied that it seemed hard to take me from a profession in which I was destined to shine; that he should for ever reproach himself if I regretted, when too late, the step I had taken; that his love and empty pockets would be but a miserable return for the sacrifice I should make. He begged me to reflect. I did; and the more I reflected, the more determined I became, and I told him so. He answered that he would

not fight with his feelings any longer ; that he was sure, when once we were married, my mother would soon forgive us.

And so it came about that I was to start on a certain day. All was settled. I was to receive the final letter with instructions, and the money for my journey. I thought the day would never come. Time seemed to creep, and not to fly. But as the day drew nearer and nearer, my heart, which had been so light and joyful, began to beat with a heavier thud. There was a kind of fear—a wish to run away from myself ; for I felt afraid of myself—my head and my heart began to argue.

On the night before I was to leave my home, I returned from my work at the theatre. I found my mother waiting supper for me as usual. I could not eat ; I was nervous and thoughtful. My mother asked me if I was ill ; or had I been annoyed at the theatre ? I shook my head. I could not trust myself to speak. When she kissed me and said, "Good night ; God bless you !" I whispered to myself, "Will He bless me to-morrow ?" The words fell from her lips like a reproach ; for although she said them to me every night, they never seemed to mean so much before—they never set me thinking as they did that night.

When I was alone in my little bedroom I fell on my knees, and prayed to God to help me and to guide me, for my heart was full of doubt. I felt how I was deceiving my dear mother, to whom I owed everything—who had taught me, who had worked with me, and who was now dependent upon me. If I went away, what would become of her and my young sisters ? How I wept and prayed that night ! I implored God to help me in my trouble, and to give me some warning in my dreams. I cried myself to sleep, but awoke several times. I heard

the church-bell toll four, six, and eight. Still no warning dream. I tried to think that perhaps my going would be for the best, or I should have surely dreamt something; and I felt a little happier as I lay thinking. Half-past eight was the post-time, and I had told the servant to bring any letters there might be for me to my room.

The half-hour struck. I heard the postman's knock. My heart seemed to stop beating. I heard the girl on the stairs. I could scarcely breathe. A knock at the door. "A letter, Miss." I jumped out of bed, and as I crossed the room to open the door, a voice, as if in great haste, said quickly, "Don't go."

God alone knows what my feelings were at that moment. Never, never, to my dying day, shall I forget it. A thrill, first of awe and terror, then of thankfulness, came over me. I fell on my knees, and said, "I won't go." The servant impatiently pushed the letter under the door. I opened it. There were the final instructions—how he would meet me on the journey, and the money for my expenses. I threw on my dressing-gown, sat down, and wrote these words: "Don't expect me; I cannot go. I have changed my mind." I enclosed the money, and sent the letter to the post. I gave a sigh of relief, lay down on the bed, and cried bitterly.

One morning, during breakfast, a few weeks later, my mother (who up to this time knew nothing of my little story) handed me the newspaper, and with a smile of satisfaction pointed to the marriage column. He had married! I threw my arms around my mother's neck, had a good cry, and told her everything.

The words of my "prophet" were fulfilled; I was acting in a London theatre. Whenever I made a success, I thought of his kind words, and remembered how I had grown to love him at last.

One day, making purchases in Regent Street, I stopped, without knowing why, at the Carrara-marble works. Serious thoughts came over me as I contemplated the headstones and monuments, and as I turned from them with a sigh, a voice by my side said, in a low tone, "Well, my faithless little one?" I turned and saw my "prophet." My first instinct was to run away, but my legs would not move.

"You see," he said, "what came of your suddenly changing your mind. I revenged myself and got married. How cruel you were!" He told me that he had married a rich woman who had been a widow just a year, within a month from my refusal. After thinking to myself that widows lost no time in settling their affairs, I told him the story of my warning, and he seemed much impressed by it. He answered, "It was, I am sure, a timely warning, for we should have been very poor. It would have been a dreary life for you, and much too big a sacrifice, with all your bright prospects. I am now a widower, with one little child. My wife died a year after our marriage. I am rich now, and can return to my old young love. I wonder if my little Juliet loves me still?" Yes, I did; but I was afraid to hope again, so I said, "You had better not see me any more; you will soon forget me." He replied, "Never, until I am under one of those," pointing to the headstones in the window. A cold chill ran through me as he spoke those words.

He was under orders to sail for India the following week, so no time was to be lost. He called on my mother, and asked her consent to our corresponding and to our marrying on his return to England, which would be in a year, providing she consented. My mother hesitated, but after tears and entreaties from me, and with the hope that he would marry a black woman, or that I should

forget him, or that something would happen to keep him in India, she reluctantly consented. The fates seemed to will it this time, and so I was happy again.

The day came to say good-bye. He showed me the pearl necklace, saying, "You see how I have guarded it. I will never part with it; it seems to have linked our two lives together." I looked at the broken beads, and all the old times came back to me. There was my necklace just as I had left it, and the knot which I had made to prevent the other beads from falling off.

I somehow wished there had been no broken link, for I had begun to feel rather superstitious now about our courtship.

Every mail brought me a letter. No one ever seemed to speak or write such words as he did, they were so good and honest. I always felt that I could trust him, and that is why I loved him.

Six months passed, and every mail had brought me my letter. How anxiously I looked for his handwriting. At last the day came again, but no letter; the next mail arrived, and the next, but still no letter. What could it mean? My mother, smiling, said, "Ah, my child! the old, old story; and I am not sorry." After a few days' reflection, I began to think that she was right, and that I had been a fool; but I was very unhappy. He had seemed to be my guiding star ever since I was a little girl, and all my first and purest love was his. Oh, it was dreadful to bear!

One day, very shortly after his third letter was due, I was again in Regent Street, and thought of the day I had so unexpectedly met him there. I was sad and miserable, but still could not help clinging to the hope of seeing him again, and that all would be explained. Perhaps he was coming home to surprise me. As I approached

the Carrara-marble works, it was with a kind of superstitious feeling—having met him there so strangely before, I should perhaps as strangely meet him there again. I stopped at the old spot, waited, looked about—no, not there! Ah! I remembered I was looking in at the window when he came; I will do so again. And there I saw a large white headstone, with these words:

Sacred to the Memory of
CAPTAIN —,
WHO DIED SUDDENLY AT KURRACHEE,
ETC., ETC.

How I got home, I know not. I found my mother in tears, reading a letter which she had received from his dearest friend, who had found my letters among his papers. He had died soon after writing to me for the last time, and my little pearl necklace was buried with him.

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

PN Bancroft, Marie Effie Wilton
2598 Gleanings from "On and off
B3A35 the stage"
1892

